THE TOP DRESSER DRAWER

Essays of Miscellany

Neil Damgaard

Amazon

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As I think about my late father, Martin Jens Damgaard, his oldest brother, Emil (Thomas), my grandparents from Denmark-Chris and Metha Damgaard, my grandson, Raymond Jens Damgaard-Ensinger, my granddaughter Jane Elizabeth Damgaard-Ensinger, my late friend Glenn Tomkinson, and my friend Chief Judge (ret.) Sam Wilson, JD, I am indebted and full of gratitude for their many contributions to me.

Preface

Essays are sometimes like a dresser drawer full of collectibles. Each item is valuable to me, and maybe even precious, but thrown together in one place they are disconnected—tossed into the drawer randomly. How do we create a coherent COLLECTION of essays? And secondly, who cares?

First, there is nothing wrong with a drawer full of random and special collectibles. A dresser drawer might contain lots of special but innocuous items, or even scary ones. Or in my case…

Old license plates representing different phases of my life, a Navy patch once worn by a daughter's one time boyfriend, an old TV Guide, a cigarette case sent by my father to my mother during World War II, a Covid mask that I thought was clever, some "ministry blocks" that I had crafted for use in teaching situations, a toy car from the first Christmas I remember, a small collectible Washington Redskins helmet, and so forth.

If I set out to write something which connects all these items, or imagined *some* connection between them, how would I do that? And more importantly, who would care? I'm not Ernest Hemingway, after all.

This is my task – I have a collection of random essays. Some

are newer and written by me; some are older and written by my father; one biographical essay was written in the 2000s by a man that I knew and loved and which, if I don't publish it, it will be lost for all time because I'm one of the few that has it. Again, who cares? The thoughts and meditations of countless millions of humans are written down, dispensed either to somebody else or to some dresser drawer (or random hard drive) and are likely forgotten. The thoughts, teachings, dreams, imaginations, meditations, prayers, songs, ballads, screenplays, expositions, editorial opinions, memories and memorials, tributes, fantasies, outcries, pleas, exhortations, accusations, criticisms or affirmations of billions of human brains have been lost. Only a few get preserved and remembered.

A video series of lectures on the Roman Empire by retired Professor of History Gregory Aldrete of the University of Wisconsin (Green Bay) gave me inspiration to do this book. He relates how much literature, some longer works, many very short "clips" of Roman people's reflections, on everything from the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79 to "what the guy next door said to my wife", still exists. Of course, large swaths of Roman history disappeared. But what IS preserved is fascinating, enlightening and even entertaining to the inquisitive.

But people are not accustomed so much anymore, it seems, to peer into what people have written, into essays of thought. Fewer essays get taught to high school English classes. How do I connect together the following, into a single volume, with a reasonably defined focus? Most are fairly short. How can they be woven together?

Recently it was said to me, "Well, these are things you, Neil, are interested in. Not everyone cares." Yes. So, these topics have captured me, of no surprise. If I was interested in birds and ornithology, I would write about that. Or 1965 Mustangs, or "cooking with turmeric." These topics memorialize, a little, several people.May you find some edification in these elucidations. There are other essays I have written and my father has written. This is a small collection connected by my desire to preserve a few.

Essays

Essay One - ***A Biography of Emil Christopher Damgaard/Thomas Keith Churchill*** by Martin Damgaard 1976

Essay Two - ***In RE "Holocaust"*** by Martin Damgaard 1979

Essay Three - ***A Letter to the 7th Grade Class of Harrisburg School (Illinois)*** by Martin Damgaard 1980

Essay Four - ***On the Prospect of a Faithless Death of a Loved One*** by Neil Damgaard 2023

Essay Five - ***On Super Groups, Their Songs and a Few Stories*** by Neil Damgaard 2023

Essay Six - ***24 Ships of Interest and Why (and the Titanic is Not One of Them)*** by Neil Damgaard 2023

Essay Seven - ***An Autobiographical Summary*** by Glenn Tomkinson 2007

Essay Eight - ***Chris and Metha: A Family Story*** by Neil Damgaard 2021

Essay Nine - ***The Funniest Stuff I Ever Saw*** by Neil Damgaard 2023

Essay Ten - ***The Third Rail of the Third Reich*** by Neil Damgaard with help from Samuel G. Wilson, JD 2023

Connecting random essays.... And the second question is (and almost more critically), "who cares?"

Family and friends may read my Collection out of politeness or propriety. My Collection also gives honor to a

few people who are special to me and for whom I hope to preserve some memory. At some point someone may find those sentiments worthwhile to read.

First is an essay by my father of which he was extremely proud and happy to produce. My father was blessed with the discovery of his long and lost **older brother**—fifteen years older than he was, who had died in 1972 (at 73) three years before the discovery. It was an amazing story. He wrote it up that year, in 1976. With some editing, I reproduce the story here, complete with the picture set that dad compiled.

There are still a good many people around who are interested in the **Second World War** and this Collection gives a certain focus to one aspect. These three essays are informative and perhaps even moving for that focus. They're also terribly serious so I load them up right at the front. Good archival writing possesses a unique nature, giving the idea that "hey, this information is valuable."

One serious theological essay of mine explores **a haunting question** that lingers in the minds of many Christian parents—it is a hard topic to attempt to consider objectively. I am not the first to ponder the subject; but I have never read anything on it…

Music and **transportation** are permanent interests of mine. And so, I explore each briefly. I include a brief piece of fiction that I wrote and imagined about **my grandparents** from Denmark, bringing together a few facts about them with lots of just plain "story."

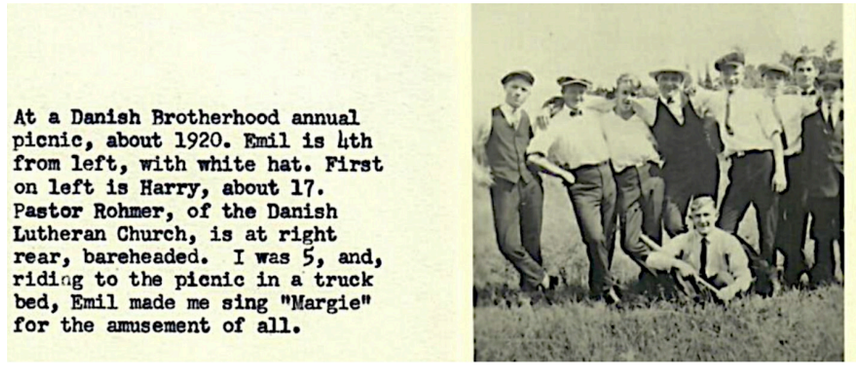
There is one essay from a deceased friend, random, disconnected to anything else in this book other than my love for him when we were young.

I include an essay on **humor**, on what's funny. On why I think some things are funny and why I think humor is biblical, healthy and edifying for the Christian who wants to keep growing in grace and faith.

Finally, I add an essay about an **ash tray**… which might be the best essay of the lot. I return to the time of the Second World War which so defined my father. It is given added color by my friend Sam G. Wilson whose father was also a Second World War soldier who also retains his son's admiration. Both my father and Sam's were born in 1914 and both died in 1994. Each had a brother who also served in the military during the Second World War and neither saw his brother during the war. Jointly Sam G. and I have enjoyed the crafting of this story.

ESSAY ONE

My father wrote an essay in 1976 chronicling one of the happiest and most surprising events of his life! Martin Damgaard's eldest brother Emil (1899-1972) disappeared completely from the family's awareness in 1934, in his thirty-fifth year. The family grieved his loss. My father and the other older brother, Harry, revered the memory of Emil as I am sure did his five sisters and parents.

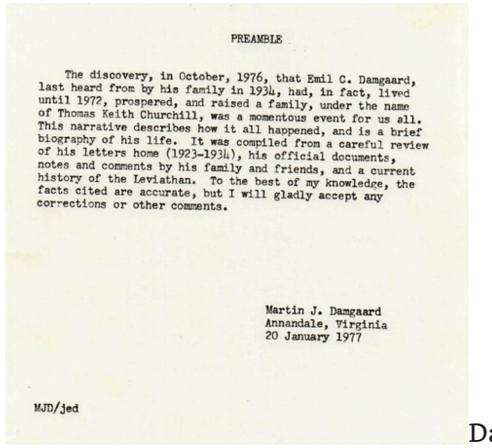


At a Danish Brotherhood annual picnic, about 1920. Emil is 4th from left, with white hat. First on left is Harry, about 17. Pastor Rohmer, of the Danish Lutheran Church, is at right rear, bareheaded. I was 5, and, riding to the picnic in a truck bed, Emil made me sing "Margie" for the amusement of all.

But Emil had not died. He had changed his name and "unfriended" his whole family. He went on to marry and have two wonderful daughters and six grandsons. Emil died in 1972. One of his daughters, four years later and after a painstaking search, found his family. That is the tale of dad's essay which he entitled *A Biography of Emil Christopher Damgaard * Thomas Keith Churchill 1899-1972*. It was such an overwhelming discovery that it seemed almost like Emil/Tom had come back to life and reconnected with his birth family! And *his own* family has been a delight!

With editing by me, I provide dad's essay – originally written by hand, in a time before the internet or word processing

computers – as the first essay in this collection of writings. Dad wrote it and my mother typed it in a show of her careful skills and in warm support of her husband in what was a momentous discovery for all. Mom was just as enchanted at the story!



PREAMBLE

The discovery, in October, 1976, that Emil C. Damgaard, last heard from by his family in 1934, had, in fact, lived until 1972, prospered, and raised a family, under the name of Thomas Keith Churchill, was a momentous event for us all. This narrative describes how it all happened, and is a brief biography of his life. It was compiled from a careful review of his letters home (1923-1934), his official documents, notes and comments by his family and friends, and a current history of the Leviathan. To the best of my knowledge, the facts cited are accurate, but I will gladly accept any corrections or other comments.

Martin J. Damgaard
Annandale, Virginia
20 January 1977

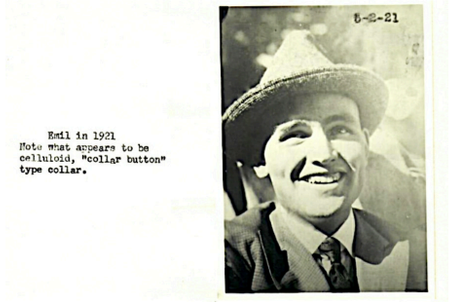
MJD/jed

Dad generously provided copies of the finished paper to many family members. He was proud of his older brother, regardless of the name and identity change. He was so overjoyed to finally learn the story and history of "Emil/Tom" that it almost didn't matter that he had been lost to the Damgaard family, nor whatever reasons were entertained for effecting the change. Dad makes this clear in the essay, which is to me both interesting and noble. Dad would have said, "look at the big picture and don't get side-tracked by the reasons, which we cannot discover now anyway." I do not know of one sibling who wrote so eloquently about another sibling, lost decades before and then found! Here is the essay, which I am proud myself to publish now, some 47 years after its writing.

A Biography of EMIL CHRISTOPHER DAMGAARD * THOMAS KEITH CHURCHILL 1899-1972

By Martin Jens Damgaard 20 January 1977

Emil Christopher Damgaard was born in Superior, Wisconsin, Douglas County, on 14 November, 1899, the second of eight children who lived and grew. In his youth he worked at various jobs, travelled to Seattle, and then to San Francisco where he lost the little and ring fingers on his left hand in an industrial accident. He returned to Superior to work for the Great Northern Railway as a locomotive oiler, hostler, and finally as fireman. But such work is seasonal in Superior, because, in the severe winters there, the harbor and lake freeze over, and the shipment of iron ore, grain and coal is halted.



Emil in 1921
Note what appears to be celluloid, "collar button" type collar.

Emil left Superior for other employment in about 1920, daughter Judy believes. He spent some time in Chicago where, by 1923, he worked at various jobs, attended night school and took a welding course. While living at the YWCA, he was selected (because of his stature) to appear as a high priest with the Chicago Opera Company, in performances by the famous Russian basso, Ivanovitch Chaliapin.

(Editor's **Note**: in a much more recent conversation with Emil's daughter, Judy, in 2019 and again in 2023, she shared that she believed he had experienced tension with his own father, Christian, over his "off hours" hijinks as a young man in Superior when he was working for the Great Northern—stories which she heard from yet-living sisters of Emil mentioned later in this biography. Running locomotives up and down the tracks during off hours, and

even involvement with a bank robbery (circa 1917 but as yet unconfirmed)! No proof was available to Judy by the 1970s, but it certainly does not seem impossible to me. Sons will be sons and fathers will be fathers—especially old-school Danish fathers and my grandfather was an esteemed leader in the Danish-American community in Superior. My father, Martin, disputed this testimony in lieu of preserving an honorable heritage for his family). Emil's maturing interests, however, lay in Engineering—as would emerge also in his little brother Martin (by 15 years).

Additional Editor's **Note:** a reading of numerous headlines and articles from the 1917 and 1918 *Duluth Rip-Saw* newspapers, posted on the Library of Congress website, reveals a strikingly "wild-west" environment with entries about frequent "vice" arrests, gang and organized crime activities, illegal gambling crimes and other often prosecuted mischiefs. That an energetic young man might be so ensnared was not surprising to me, when I read newspaper articles over the period.

phonograph for unlawful purposes in connection with the sale of

"The particular case in point is a short section of road under Com-

Commissioner Pentilla is "A Man

(Continued on Page 5.)

PREACHER PULLS TIGER'S WHISKERS

Rev. T. K. Leech Fearlessly Wages Successful War Against Slot Machines and Punch Boards in the Mesaba Range Towns, Thereby Protecting the Young From Demoraliizng Gambling Habits.

VIRGINIA, Minn., Aug. 30.—(Special to the Rip-saw)—Hanni bal swore eternal enmity against Rome, old John Brown fought slavery at all times and in all ways, finally dying a felon but doing a work that will never die. Rev. T. K. Leech long years ago swore eternal enmity against old John Barleycorn. He has fought valiantly against the tottering autocrat. He further has distin guished himself by pulling out nearly all the whiskers from the face of the Tiger in the iron range towns.

Until Rev. Mr. Leech began to

boards has saved $150,000 per an-num from worse than being wasted.

The way things were headed, it would not have been long before the Mesaba and Vermilion iron ranges would have squandered $1,000,000 a year on slot machines, punch boards, dice-shaking and, perhaps, poker privately played.

It was not many years ago that most of the hotels on the iron ranges had well equipped gambling rooms. Grand Rapids was a popular place for the Tiger on the western end of the Mesaba range.

Threats have been made against Mr. Leech's life. Friends have urged that he take steps to secure the right to carry weapons in his own defense. The proper officials to make that possible seem to hang back.

Over at Tower, Mr. Leech proved so unppular that the local paper called him a "slacker." It is expected that a libel suit will grow out of that for Mr. Leech has great pride in his loyalty and citizenship. He was the first man to enlist from Virginia in the Spanish-American war and served 18 months in the American

Emil moved to Philadelphia, hoping for better part-time

educational opportunities, and worked there, for a short time, for what he called "a sawdust people", and then moved on to New York City. Here, on 8 September 1923, he was fortunate in obtaining a highly coveted berth as an oiler on the S.S. Leviathan, at the time the largest and finest passenger liner afloat in the world. He was 24 years old.

By this time (1923), Emil Damgaard had changed his name to: "Thomas Keith Churchill". No evidence is available as to precisely when or where this action occurred, or as to the reasons he gave. However, it appears likely that it was done in Chicago, because he refers in a later letter to a "friend who is a lawyer" there. Obviously, this name change must have been a legal one, and his service on S.S. Leviathan must have been performed as Thomas Churchill, because of the necessity to hold such official documents as Seaman and Engineer licenses and a U.S. Passport. Also, because his next berth after leaving the Leviathan was aboard a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (a U.S Government) ship, as Thomas Keith Churchill, and his references from the Leviathan, licenses and passport would have had to conform.

Nevertheless, he continued for some 11 years, until May 1934, to distantly (and sporadically) correspond with his parents, brothers and sisters, as Emil C. Damgaard, using his full name on occasion, later signing only "Emil", and on some correspondence, only "E". Then all communication stopped.

At an ancient temple ruin in Greece. Helen Churchill has the same photo, but in a sitting pose, never seen (by me) in the Damgaard file.

A Great Northern Railway engine wreck from which the engineer and fireman jumped. Emil is thought to be fireman.

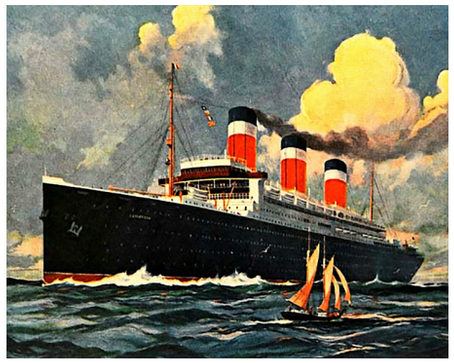
At sea, aboard the Leviathan. Nature of control mechanism is unknown.

At sea, also on Leviathan c. 1924

In the light of current knowledge, it is now evident that he maintained what must have been a separate address for this

purpose, but speculation now, or even proof, of his reasons for any or all of these actions appear to be both idle and inappropriate. Suffice it to say that his reasons must have been both good and sufficient to support the legal name change, subsequent U.S. Navy and U.S. Maritime Service commissions and wartime security clearances, as well as all of the personal implications, as will be explained. Also, the validity of the assumption that the late Thomas Keith Churchill was, in fact, Emil Christopher Damgaard, will be addressed and supported.

The S.S. Leviathan was built by the German shipowner Albert Ballin for service in the Hamburg American Lines, and was launched in April, 1913, as the "Vaterland". She was in New York harbor in April, 1917, when the U.S. declared war on Germany, and was seized for American use. She was converted to a troop carrier, and performed brilliantly throughout the war, but then lay inactive for some four years, a victim of commercial and political controversy. Finally, she was converted to the most modern and luxurious liner in the world, owned by the U.S. Shipping Board, operated by the United States Lines, and put into service between New York City and Southampton England with a stop at Cherbourg, France, each way. She was christened "Leviathan", and made her maiden voyage in July, 1923.



She quickly became the favorite of many famous people and her sailings were front page news on both sides of the Atlantic, for many years. [Editor's **Note**: Judy believes her father

left Superior, never to return, sometime around 1922. If that date is true, Emil would keep contact with his family in Superior, if clandestinely, for another 12 years.]

It was on this historic ship that Emil (now Thomas) obtained a position in the engineering crew, and, on September 8th, 1923, sailed from New York on the Leviathan's fourth voyage. He served on her continuously for the next 2 ½ years, through 32 voyages, and during winter repair and maintenance periods in Hoboken and Boston. His first voyage set a new speed record. His second voyage was through the worst hurricane in memory, with 100-mile winds and waves of 70 feet from trough to crest. On this voyage he was promoted from oiler to fireman; on the next, to water tender, and on the next, to engineer.

During his service, the ship was to experience the breakdown of two of her four reversing turbine engines, grounding in New York harbor, loss of propellor blades several times, cracking of some primary structural parts, and many other crises, but also many triumphs. During most of this time, he was one of three "fan engineers", with officer rank, and two gold stripes on his sleeve.

On his last crossing on board the Leviathan, Voyage 35 West, king-sized storms forced Leviathan to fight her way home on the slowest and most difficult passage of her peacetime career, after which she sailed for Boston to have new propellors installed, arrived back in Hoboken, N.J. on February 13th. Emil resigned from the Leviathan on 6 March, 1026. In a letter from New York, 7 March 1926, he says: "I must tell you about getting off yesterday. When I went to the Chief's (i.e. "Chief Engineer's") office for my pay voucher, the Marine Sup't. happened to be there, and they wanted to know all about why I was leaving. And they went so far as to offer me a promotion to stay. Pretty good, wasn't it? They almost made me change my mind. But I had decided to make a change, so I had to turn his offer down. He certainly gave me a grand letter of recommendation, though."

One week later, on 13 March, 1926, Emil signed aboard the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Dredge "W.T. Russell", which he describes, in a letter to Superior, on 19 March as a Diesel Electric, and says that he is "working for the government now". Also, that "I think I'm very fortunate in getting on something like this, although the pay is not as much as I got on the 'Levi'. She is operated by electricity, there isn't a bit of steam on her. They even cook with electricity and have electric heat, too. She's brand new and sure is a dandy." He wrote to Superior again, on 13 June, from Petersburg, Alaska, from this vessel.

On 1 July, 1926, by War Department letter, the U.S. Engineer Office, Seattle, issued to Thomas Keith Churchill, a Certificate of Service, as oiler, on the W.T. Russell from 13 March to 1 July, 1926.

On 28 February, 1927, a Citizen Seaman's Identification Card #50911 was issued by the U.S. Collector of Customs at the Port of Philadelphia to Thomas Keith Churchill, citing his birthplace as Laramie, Wyoming, and birthplace of his father as "Pennsylvania", and of mother as "Wales". This version of his origin appears on all subsequent official documents throughout his life.

During 1927-1928, he voyaged to Spain, Russia, Paris, Lisbon, Casablanca, Alexandria and Beirut on various American vessels. He invested in the installation of ice plants in Alexandria and Casablanca with great expectations, but the business "didn't pan out" and he lost the money because "In Egypt the British don't want you and in Morocco the French the same, but the natives prefer Americans".

A letter of 1 Feb 1929 from the Superintendent Engineer (American Export Lines) to the Chief Engineer, S.S. Executive, introduces Thomas Keith Churchill as the new 3rd Assistant Engineer. In a letter from New York to Superior, 21 June, 1929, Emil says that he is an "Engineer Officer on an American Ship,

combination mail, freight and passenger". On 29 June, he was leaving for Africa, and clearly stated his return address on the envelope as "E. Damgaard, Box 2107, 25 South Street, N.Y.C." By 18 Dec., he had returned from Africa, and was leaving for the Persian Gulf.

On 21 April, 1930, Emil was in Novarassisk, Russia, where "the American dollar buys less than anywhere I've been. No one here is ever dressed up. At night they promenade in their working clothes, and seem to resent the fact that we are dressed up when they meet us ashore. They don't like to see anyone with a white collar or a hat, as they consider that a sign of "Capitalism". They don't believe in luxury in any form. There are no nice shops at all, only government supply depots. Of course, there is no profiteering, or anything like that, but the whole thing seems very unnatural to me".

Thomas Keith Churchill was commissioned an Ensign in the Naval Reserve of the United States Navy on 30 September, 1930.

In 1931, two very important things occurred. Thomas Keith Churchill (Emil) met his future wife. In the words of his eldest daughter, Priscilla, "his very good friend, Capt. Mitchel, and Mother's good friend, Mrs. Mitchel, introduced Mother and Daddy to each other." The young lady in question was Miss Helen Dimetory, who was born in Greece, but lost her parents there during her childhood, and, at age 10, immigrated to the U.S. with an uncle (Capt. Mitchel?). She has a twin sister.

Also, during 1931, Emil had what he describes as "a little stroke of bad luck". In a letter from St. Felice, Spain to Superior, on 31 Dec., he says: "It began with an impacted wisdom tooth which I should have had out long ago. It caused an infection, so I had to go to a hospital where I say for some time. They were waiting for a chance to operate on my jaw. A friend came to visit me and was able to get me in touch with one of the best surgeons

in Europe, who fixed me up without the operation. But if cost me plenty." Helen Churchill knows all of the details from her own experience.

That was the last communication from Emil to Superior containing any significant information. He continued to send postcards, signed "E", with noncommittal notes such as "Best Wishes from Gibraltar", for about two years. Then there was a simple Mother's Day telegram from New York in 1933, followed by a short letter from Alexandria on 22 November 1933 [**Note**: 30 years to the day before President Kennedy's assassination], reminiscing about his mother's good soup with meat balls and rye bread, and a Mother's Day telegram from Napoli on 12 May, 1934. And with that telegram, the written record of Emil Christopher Damgaard ended. He was 34 ½ at the time. He had never returned home. [His mother was 64, his father 65 and his youngest brother, Martin, was 19].

Subsequent efforts by the members of the Damgaard family to trace Emil's whereabouts, through the Seaman's Church Institute of New York and others, were to no avail, and his fate remained a complete mystery to them for over 42 years. We know now that he lived for another 38 years, through an eminent and distinguished career, and a happy retirement with his family, until his death on 4 June 1972. He had been completely successful in submerging his original identity, although his family was naturally curious about his (and their) origins. His daughter Judith, after a skiing trip in Colorado, visited Laramie and researched the records, but found no trace of their name. When she confronted her father with this, he jovially, but steadfastly, refused to discuss the matter.

But in the fulness of time, and through the persistence of continuing love of his two daughters, a series of events began on 21 October 1976 which led eventually to the union of his two families. The Damgaard family learned of the history of their brother Emil since his disappearance from their knowledge, and

his widow and two daughters learned of his origins Here is how it happened.

On the morning of 22 October, 1976, Edith Damgaard, in Superior, received a telephone call from a Mrs. Judith Stothoff, of Flemington, New Jersey, advising that she had good reason to believe that she and her sister, Mrs. Priscilla Jefferson, also of Flemington, both neé Churchill, are the daughters of [the late] Emil Damgaard, later know as Thomas Keith Churchill, who died in June, 1972. Also, that their mother, Mrs. Helen Churchill, neé Dimetory, is his widow. She had reached this conclusion as a result of a telephone search for an Ethel Dockstader, married to Walter, with two children, Walter Jr. and Arlyne. She had initiated the search because of captioned photos in her father's personal effects. The following is Judith's description of these events. [I remember Judy speaking of finding an old, small address book with the name "Dockstader" in it].

"1. Soon after Daddy's death in June 1972, I went to Kennedy International Airport, and at random looked up "Dockstader" in phone books, approximately 20 numbers.

2. Called about half, asking for the whereabouts of an Ethel, married to Walter, with 2 children, Walter Jr. and Arlyne. No one knew an Ethel, etc.

3. On Thursday, Oct. 21, 1976m Priscilla called, early evening, and said: "I;ve been wondering for 2 days if anyone is thinking of whatever happened to Daddy". I said I'd try to find the list of Dockstaders and call those I hadn't called before.

4. Called Va., and a man said call H. Kneale Dockstader in Bucks County, Pa. – his dad – who had a genealogy of the family. I did, and no Ethel, etc.

5. At random, dialed Calif. area codes (because last address – on correspondence Mother had – of Ethel was Calif).

6. At one number, I was told to call Dorothy Dockstader

Rooney in Kansas City – none listed.

7. Several calls later, again told to call Dorothy Dockstader Rooney – but she lived in Dodge City – I did, and she said she's look up on her genealogy charts, and get back to me. She did, 10 minutes later, and said she found an Ethel, mother of Walter Jr. and Arlyne, but maiden name was Damgaard, of Superior, Wisconsin.

8. Ethel had responded to D.D. Rooney's genealogy questionnaires in 1964. She gave me Walter's telephone number in Ventura, Calif. and also Walter Jr.'s and Arlyne's addresses (they had also responded to the genealogy questionnaires.)

9. I called Walter Sr., and was told by his current wife that Walter's first wife (now deceased) was named Ethel. I then spoke with Walter Sr., and was told that Ethel had a brother Emil who was a merchant seaman; also, physical description sounded correct.

10. Walter gave me Edith's address and telephone number.

11. On Friday, Oct. 22, AM, I got a picture of Walter Jr. and Arlyne, also Daddy's address book, from mother, and went to Priscilla's to call Edith. Mother said she hoped God would guide us to the right phone number this time.

12. Before calling, we were now almost certain of Daddy's being Emil, because the address for Ethel in the book was the same as Edith's – 1926 Banks Avenue [in Superior, Wisconsin].

13. Called Edith, and all history we knew was same as Edith's information – except Alaska, San Fran., Calif., Gr. Northern RR fireman, Chicago Opera, etc.

14. At noon, we called Mother, and said we thought we had found Daddy's family. Then called Walter Sr, back, and left message that 'Emil is my father'."

After speaking to Judith on the morning of 22 October,

Edith called Martin, in Annandale, Va., and told him of the phone call. She also called Freda Weller [her sister], in Stevens Point. Martin advised [the eldest sibling] Helen Nesper, in Miami, and [their brother] Harry – and through him, [their sister] Marvel Hamblet – in Seattle, Washington. Judith called Edith again that evening, with additional information, and suggested that she visit Edith to compare notes, and to firm up the relationship, if appropriate. She phoned Martin the following morning for further discussion, and said that she and her mother and sister were planning a visit to Superior the next week, possibly Tuesday.

On Saturday, Martin and Joe decided that Edith, and Freda – if she could make the visit – should not be required to face this occasion alone, and called Freda and Edith to say that they would also attend. Both agreed.

And so it happened that Freda arrived in Superior on Sunday 24 Oct. 1976, Martin and Joe on Monday, on 25 Oct '76, and Mrs. Helen Churchill, Mrs. Priscilla Jefferson, Mrs. Judith Stothoff, on Tuesday 26 Oct 1976. After introductions, an explanation by Judy of how this all happened at this particular time, and an exchange of evidence – comparison of photographs, letters, documents, and experiences – we were all fully convinced that Emil C. Damgaard and Thomas K. Churchill were one and the same.

There followed over the next two days a very happy reunion, with a gradual realization on our (Damgaard) part that the long and baffling mystery of Emil has been solved, and that we Damgaards all have a new sister-in-law and two new married nieces, each with three sons. On their part, the Churchills find themselves full-fledged members of a substantial new family tree. During these two days, the whole group toured points of mutual interest to them in Superior – the house on 65th Street, the Billings School, the Nenadji River, the vicinity of the "old" 10 acre farm (Emil's childhood home), the cemetery, Billings

Park, the Great Northern roundhouse and yards, the GN grain elevators, the Allouez ore docks, and the Mocassin Mike beach on Lake Superior. We enjoyed two delightful dinners together – one hosted by each family.

Before the Churchills' departure, a Damgaard genealogy, including the Churchill branch, was drawn and presented to them, copies of their documents made, arrangements were made for photos from each family's files to be copied, and Emil's letters were loaned to Priscilla for copying. Tentative plans were made for Martin and Joe to attend the Churchill annual Thanksgiving dinner in Flemington – an event which was later consummated with great enjoyment by all. At that time, additional data were obtained which permitted a cohesive narrative of the history and times of Emil Damgaard as Thomas Keith Churchill. That narrative now continues.

Thomas Churchill and Helen Dimetory were married in "The Little Church Around the Corner", in New York City, on 11 June, 1932 [just about concurrent with Martin's high school graduation]. He was the 3rd Asst. Engineer of the S.S. EXCALIBUR, on Shore Leave pass #125/72. By this time, he had begun his life's work, as 3rd, 2nd, 1st Assistant, and finally as Chief Engineer, on ships of The American Export Lines (now American Export Isbrantsen Lines). This is a very large merchant shipping company, operating over 30 ships carrying cargo, passengers and mail to foreign and coast wise ports, with headquarters at River and First Streets, Hoboken, N.J. 07030. He served this company for some 36 years, licensed under U.S. Coast Guard regulations as "US Marine Officer, Chief Engineer of Steam Vessels of Any Horsepower".

As of the date of his first license, he was the only individual to take and pass the 3rd, 2nd, 1st Ass't and Chief tests at the same sitting. On the date of his last license renewal, 19 July 1969, he was informed that his next renewal would set a record for the longest continual qualification as Chief Engineer in Coast

Guard history.

On 19 November, 1934, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, N.Y. Division, U.S. Coast Guard, issued "Certificate of Efficiency to Lifeboat Man" #42306, Serial 257043, to Thomas Keith Churchill The certificate bears a photograph. On the same day, the U.S. Navy released Letter NAV168AFL, 67345, Bureau of Navigation, Subject: "Correspondence Course-Engineering, Completion of", with 1st Endorsement, 23 Nov 34, from the Commandant, 3rd Naval District, addressed to Thomas Keith Churchill, stating that "On 19 Nov 34, course was completed with average mark of 3.94 "(on a scale of 4.0)." This is a remarkable achievement, corresponding to a grade of 98.5 on the normal scale of 100 for an entire engineering course.

The Churchills lived in Hoboken, and then in Arlington, N.J. Their first child, Priscilla Barbara, was born on 29 December 1936.

The US Coast Guard issues to each licensed seaman a "Continuous Discharge Book" in which is entered, on a line for each voyage, the seaman's name, position, the vessel, the master, port and date of embarkation, destination, date of arrival, and discharge for that voyage, signed by an official. Tom Churchill's Continuous Discharge Book for 1937-1959, shows numerous voyages, usually as Chief Engineer, to foreign and domestic coastwise ports on each of the following American Export ship: CONSTANCE CHANDLER, EXAMALIA, EXPLORER, EXILOMA, WILLING CODDINGTON, ORPHEUS, EXECUTOR, EXATONIA, EXCELLENCY, EXHIBOTOR, EXCHESTER, EXERMONT, EXETER, EXMOUTH, EXMINSTER, EXEMPLAR and EXBROOK.

Thomas K. Churchill
In the uniform of a Commander,
United States Maritime Service
World War II photo

During the period covered by these voyages, many other important events occurred. In 1941, the Churchills bought a house in Nutley, N.J. Their second child, Judith Diane, was born on 8 Sept 1941. On 3 March 1843, Tom was issued Seaman's Passport #87051 which describes the lack of the last two fingers on his left hand. On 27 May 43, he signed a Sworn Acceptance of this ASMS Assignment. This began his World War II service in uniform.

Still on cargo ships he made numerous convoy duty runs, carrying ammunition and military equipment, to Murmansk, Russia, and to Mediterranean ports. These runs were extremely hazardous, and often ½ to ¾ of the convoy would be lost, torpedoed, blown up and sunk, by German submarines. (Note: For an excellent description of such runs, and the responsibilities of the Chief Engineer on such ships, read "The Cruel Sea" by Nicholas Monsarrat). When the war ended, Tom Churchill returned to American Export Lines civilian duties. On 12 May 1945, he became a 32 Degree Mason in the Shrine Temple, Newark, N.J.

Also during this period, he left the sea for some 3 years, in 1951-2-3, and became the company's Assistant Port Engineer for the Port of New York. In this capacity he supervised the condition of engineering of all incoming and outgoing company ships, and was responsible that repair parts were available, that repairs were made on schedule, and that the ships were seaworthy in a timely manner. This job took him to Norfolk, Va. and Baltimore, Md. Frequently, for short periods.

In 1954, Tom Churchill returned to sea, resuming his Chief Engineer position. His daughter Priscilla, during the Superior visit, wrote this: "His trips at sea, as I remember, would be a period of six weeks to about three and a half months (India Run). He wrote lovely long letters to <u>each</u> of us frequently. His return home was always a happy occasion, and he delighted in bringing us lovely gifts from around the world". (Note: He referred to Priscilla as "The Duchess". He himself was addressed by all but his family as "Chief").

In the late 1950s, he arranged "courtesy" cruises for his wife, Helen, to Europe and the Mediterranean, abord the Company's two luxurious liners, SS CONSTITUTION and INDEPENDENCE, where she was treated as a VIP, ate at the captain's table, and had her transportation ashore available and waiting, and generally enjoyed the Company's best. She was not permitted, however, to travel on the same ship as him.

Thomas Churchill retired in September, 1964, but still made occasional trips to American Export Lines when they needed him, until 1969. "This pleased him very much."

31 Mar 59 - 29 Mar 62	
26 Jun 62 -29 Sep 62	
18 Feb 63 -12_ Apr 63	Ch Engr SS EXBROOK 14 Foreign and 11 Coastwise Trips
Ch Engr SS EXCHESTER	2 Foreign Trips
Ch Engr SS EXILONA	1 Foreign and Coastwise Trip
27-May-63	Ch Engr SS EXPORT AMBASSADOR
17 Jun 63 - 22 May 64	5 Foreign & 3 Coastwise Trips
17 Jul 64 Ch Engr SS FLYING FISH	Ch Engr SS EXILONA. 5 Foreign & 3 Coastwise Trips
22 Jul 64 Ch Engr SS EXPORT ADVENTURER	Foreign
Sept 1964 - 15 Oct 1964	RETIRED
9-Nov-64	SS EXECUTER Coastwise
9-Dec-64	SS EXPRESS Coastwise
5-May-65	SS FLYING FISH Coastwise
2-Aug-65	SS SANTO CERRO (United Fruit - Refrigerated) Foreign
	SS EXCELSIOR Coastwise
30-Aug-65	SS Flying Spray - Coastwise to Toledo, Ohio. (Note: Thomas K. Churchill was on the first ship to negotiate the St. Lawrence Seaway. This would be another such passage. Incidentally, he was also on the first ship to deliver grain to Russia).
2? Jan 66	S THOMAS A. Coastwise
	SS THOMAS A. Intercoastal
22 Jul 66 28 Jul 67	SS FLYING CLOUD Coastwise
8-Aug-69	SS EASTERN STAR Valman Shipping Foreign. To Long Beach Cal. & Singapore and return.
	Note: Last Voyage

Tom and Helen Churchill sold their house in Nutley, N.J. when he retired. After a brief stay in Princeton, N.J., they moved to an apartment in Flemington, N.J. in March, 1965, to be near their two daughters, by now married. At this time, he had also reverted to inactive status in the US Navy Reserve, and Identification Card, No. N3,893,552, dated 16 Jan 1965, gives his rank as Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Serial No. 67937, SSN 081-12-3045. Having been commissioned an Ensign in 1930, he had maintained his Navy Reserve status for 35 years.

Of his retirement, Priscilla says: “Mother and Daddy, after he retired, enjoyed many lovely trips on various American Export Lines ships. He adored his sons-in-law and his fine grandsons, and spent many happy times with them”.

Priscilla, the elder daughter, had married Richard Gale Jefferson, of Flemington, the son of the County Prosecutor, and himself now a successful estate lawyer. They have three sons: Jonathan Keith and Timothy Brian, fraternal twins, born 3 Aug 64, and Richard Gale Jr. born 5 Aug 66. Judith married William

Luther Stothoff III, an Army Corps of Engineers veteran, who owns and operates Wm. Stothoff Company Inc., a substantial organization established by his grandfather in 1885, and formerly operated by his father. The company drills water wells and installs pumping systems, nationwide. Judy and “Pete” also have three sons: Robert Hunt, born 23 June 63, David Churchill, born 30 Mar 68 and Thomas Keith Churchill, born 2 May 75.

Emil Christopher Damgaard – Thomas Keith Churchill, became ill and entered Hunterdon Medical Center on 5 May 1972. His illness was diagnosed as a cancer of the esophagus, which was determined to be inoperable. H returned home for one week-end visit. He was comfortable throughout his illness, and comatose at the end. He died on 4 June 1972. His funeral was conducted at Calvary Episcopal Church, Flemington, N.J. In response to his own wish, his remains were cremated and buried at sea, from a ship on which he and Helen had enjoyed happy cruises together.

An excerpt of the vessel’s Official Log Book became a matter of Federal Record, and was vise’d at the first opportunity, on 4 December 1972, by the American Vice Consul, Republic of Lebanon, City of Beirut, Embassy of the United States of America.

The ship’s captain wrote to Helen:

SS EXPORT AMBASSADOR

AT SEA

* * *

Mr. Churchill’s ashes were buried at sea, in 1600 fathoms, with the traditional seaman’s ceremony, on November 24th, 1972, at 1030 Greenwich Mean Time.

The position was Latitude 35-26 North, Longitude 16-08

West – 162 miles North Northeast of Madeira Island. The position has no significance other than it was the first pleasant, smooth, sunny day of a rough Eastbound winter crossing.

The ceremony was attended by Officers, crew and passengers. Seven of the men knew Mr. Churchill personally. The remains were interred by the youngest man aboard, and the whistle sounded three times, in final farewell.

Note on "The World's Greatest Ship" LEVIATHAN

In 1975, my son Neil, then an industrial engineer employed by a management engineering consulting firm under U.S. Navy contract, encountered, in his work, an excerpt from "Proceedings of the U.S.N. Institute" which described a 5-volume history of the Leviathan still in preparation. Volumes 1 and 2 were complete, bringing the history to the point at which the ship was entering its peace time passenger service. Obviously the next volume would cover the period in which Emil served on her, and would require at least another year to publish. The author is Mr. Frank O. Braynard [1916-2007], a noted artist and historian. The publisher is the South Street Seaport Museum, 16 Fulton Street, N.Y., N.Y., 10038. The series is titled "The World's Greatest Ship" Leviathan.

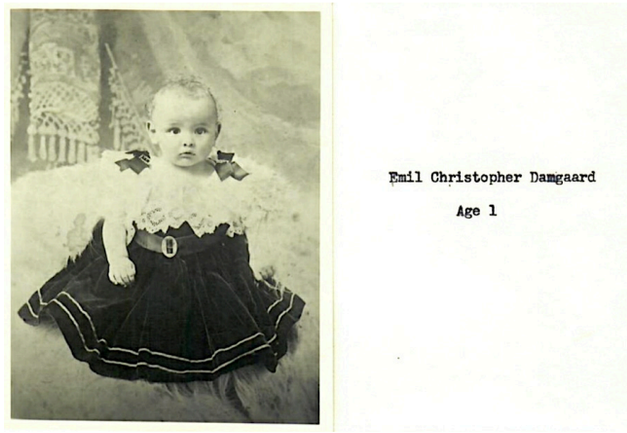
When I learned about Thomas Keith Churchill, I contacted the Museum, to inquire from Mr. Braynard whether Vol. 3 had been published and whether Emil/Tom was included. It developed that Mr. Braynard is the director of Operation Sail, the agency that, from his conception, and under his direction, organized and operated the Bicentennial race and visit of the Tall Ships to the U.S. His offices are in the World Trade Center, New York City.

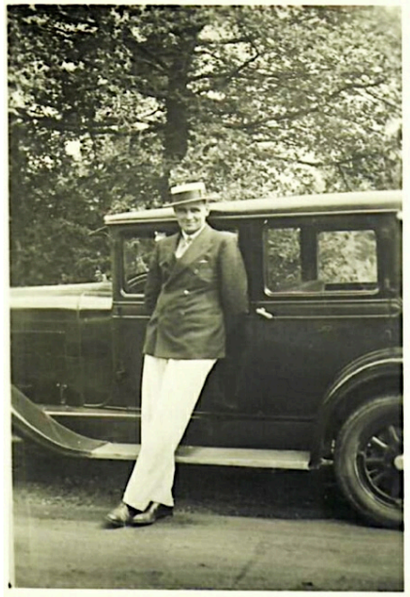
I finally reached him by phone, and found that Vol. 3 had just been published, but that Emil/Tom was not included because no one had told Mr. Braynard about him. He is basing his history not only on official records but also largely on personal

letters, diaries and memorabilia from former passengers, crew members, their families and friends. He was most delighted to hear form me, and is anxious that we should meet, and to see our Leviathan material, so that he might use it in Vol. 4. He thinks that Emil's "dual identity" life is a fascinating story. He now believes that he has met Tom Churchill, through a mutual friend, Mr. Joe Farr, a former director of the Museum, now retired to British Columbia.

MJD

Following are more of the pictures which dad painstakingly collected, duplicated, annotated and included in each copy of the essay. A few are embedded earlier.





Thomas Keith Churchill
About 1930, considering
the auto.

Emil, later in his career

Tom and Helen on a cruise.
This is as they remember him.

Note: The Damgaard name continues with Emil's brother Harry's son, James Damgaard, his son Michael (both of Washington state), my daughters Jocelyn and Susanna, and myself, Neil. The heritage continues with Emil's six grandchildren, and my two grandchildren, grandson of whom is named Raymond Jens Damgaard-Ensinger and granddaughter Jane Elizabeth Damgaard-Ensinger.

ESSAY TWO

Edited by Neil Damgaard September 2023

Dad was unlike many Second World War veterans, to my hearing. Many have been unwilling or disinterested in talking about the war. Dad was *not* at all unwilling to speak of what he saw and in fact, took it as something of a personal mission to reveal and to exegete some of the darker events and practices of the Third Reich. This is not to minimize the effect his acquaintance with such things had upon him personally, which I think was great. But he wanted those events and practices not to become forgotten or the scope of their evil to be diminished. He had personally written his U.S. Army battalion's history which I have published elsewhere. (Dad just in general, loved history as do I. We can't seem NOT to mine it). As part of a series of a few 602nd Engineer Camouflage Battalion reunions in the 1970s (whose members were by then dwindling), he was asked to write down some of his reflections. He wrote the following essay in 1979 at the request of the late Gertrude Carr, a teacher in Harrisburg, Illinois and the daughter of one of dad's soldiers, George Carr T-5, who was (according to MJD) a gifted artist.

IN RE "HOLOCAUST"

Written at the request of the Seventh Grade
of the Harrisburg Elementary School in Harrisburg, Illinois

Martin J. Damgaard 1979

On the 6th of June, 1944, the Armies of the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia executed, on the beaches of Normandy, France, the greatest amphibious landing in the history of mankind, and began an invasion that would

defeat Adolph Hitler's Germany and destroy the Third Reich for all time. The advance elements of the First U.S. Army, of which we in the 602nd Engineer Camouflage Battalion were a part, landed on beaches designated Omaha and Utah. Our battalion engaged in the D-Day landings with a platoon on each beach.

On the 4th of July, the remainder of the Battalion landed on Omaha, and climbed that famous cliff. At the top we were greeted by the sight of an American helmet, hanging on a fence post, a with a .50 caliber bullet in one side and out the other. With German planes raiding another part of the beach, we were in no doubt that we were in the war. Some days later, the sight of a German Panther tank, well camouflaged in some trees, and six American Sherman tanks, burned, and with armor piercing shell holes through the white stars on their sides, put there by the German, left no doubt that we had an important part to play. The white stars had been ordered painted on vehicles to identify American vehicles to friendly planes. One of our first acts was to order their obliteration, under authority by the Army Engineer, and to begin an immediate and massive program of camouflage pattern painting for this purpose.

M3 Stuart light tank, painted in winter camouflage scheme, Belgium 1945 from MJD history of the 602nd Camouflage Engineer Battalion, First Army

But back to the six tanks. A look inside one of them was enough. There sat two charred fragments of what had been American soldiers—one in the driver's seat and one in the gunner's seat. A black charred knob on the top, the head, a length of connected

segments, with small protrusions on each side, the ribs, and a knob on the bottom, the hips. I mention all this to point out that fire is common in war.

By the time of this invasion, the war, of course, had been going on for a long time. Poland, Dunkirk, Africa, El Alamein, Italy, Stalingrad, Salerno were history. But Hitler's dream of a Master Race, and his concomitant program to eliminate all those not qualified to be members of it, began in the early days, was still on-going. The pictures I include show a small part of how it was, for ordinary people, to be caught up in that dream.

It was Hitler's intention to exterminate every Jew on the face of Europe, and also most of the Slavic races, as well as all incapacitated and dissenting people. First, they were robbed of their businesses, houses, factories, bank accounts, furniture, cars and clothes, in a systematic program of oppression. Then they were sent to the concentration camps, with two suitcases allowed, which were taken from them on arrival. The Jews habitually carried their valuables with them. Entire trainloads of gold trinkets, diamonds, sapphires, rubies, silver ingots, gold dollars and banknotes were shipped to Germany. The program was planned and executed in three phases. First, the gathering and robbing of the victims. Second, exploitation of their living bodies, using ½ the calories left in them, through work without enough food to stay alive. Third, exploitation of their corpses. Hair was used for felt Army boots. Gold teeth were melted down. Ashes from crematories were used for fertilizer, and body fats were rendered down for soap, but this was later found to be uneconomical.

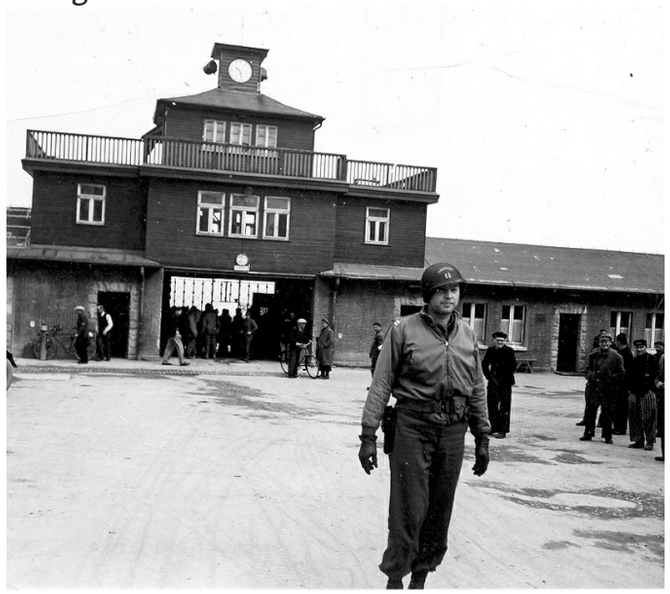
As early as 1938, Berlin had established a large installation at a place called Riga to use as a transit camp for Jews from Germany and Austria. At that time there were 320,000 Jews and 180,000 Austrian Jews there. By 1941, tens of thousands had been exterminated, mainly in Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen, Ravensbruck, Dachau, Belsen, Therienstadt, and Buchenwald.

Work was begun to expand six extermination camps at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Soliboro, Chelmo and Maidanik. Until these were ready, Riga was chosen to "store" the Jews. Between August 1941 and October 1944, 200,000 German and Austrian Jews were shipped to Riga. 80,000 died there. 120,000 were shipped to the six extermination camps and eliminated.

The Reich Economic Administration Main Office, mentioned earlier, was the middle section of the operation. Identification of the victims, rounding them up, transporting them, and then executing them after the economic exploitation, were the tasks of the RSHA, the Reich Security Main Office. The term "security" was used in the sense that it was the Reich's security that was being protected. The RSHA was divided into six departments, called "Amts". Amt One was Administration. Amt Two was Equipment and Finance. Amt Three was the Security Service and Police, headed by Heinrich Heydrich. They devised and used the tortures to make suspects talk. Amt Four was the Gestapo. Its Jewish Section was headed by Adolf Eichmann, who, after the war, was kidnapped in Argentina and executed in Jerusalem by the Israelis. Amt Five was the Criminal Police and Amt Six was the Foreign Intelligence Service. The two successive heads of Amt Three, Heydrich and Kaltenbrunner, were also the overall chiefs of the whole RSHA, and the head of Amt One was their Deputy. It has been said that, if guilt were to be specified, most of it rests with these two departments, involving some thousands, and not the millions who make up contemporary Germany, some sixty million Germans, including small children, women, old-age pensioners, soldiers, sailors, and airmen, who had nothing to do with the Holocaust.

It is against the background described above, for deliberate, commanded, organized, staffed, financed and equipped forces, specifically selected and trained, and motivated, for the active and continuous forceful selection, torture and murder of more people than live in New York City and Chicago combined,

that the photos of Buchenwald should be viewed. The photos of burned bodies are from a different camp, one named "Schoenenfeld", or "Beautiful Field", of all things. These photos are gruesome enough, to be sure, and they depict a heinous and inhuman action. When the guards at this camp realized that the Allies would shortly arrive, they herded the inmates into wooden barracks, locked them in, spread gasoline on the buildings, and ignited them. In one of the photos a group of bodies may be seen huddled in a corner, presumably the last place to be burned. But some of the victims apparently escaped the building and ram, as flaming torches demented by pain. The guards had stationed members of the Hitler Youth, 10- to 12-year-old boys, with their heads filled with propaganda about the glories of the fatherland – and these were armed with submachine guns.



They shot down the burning victims who escaped the buildings, and it these that are seen within the barbed wire of "Schoenenfeld." [Editor: See **Note** at end] But, while these people died in agony, it should be remembered that death by fire is, and has always been, common to war. Our own Army, and all

others, inflict such death with flame throwers, when attacking a fortified position, and, of course, with gelatinized gasoline called napalm, dropped from the air on strong enemy positions. The action at Schoenenfeld, thus, is an isolated incident not unlike other warlike acts, except that it was inflicted on helpless non-combatants. But it was not planned that way.

The larger story is embodied in the photos of Buchenwald. Buchenwald was one of the Death Camps. It is located just outside of the city of Weimar which, ironically, was the home of such German cultural greats as the poet Goethe, and the composer Franz Liszt. It was also the home of the post-World War One German (or Weimar) Republic, which was overwhelmed and replaced by Hitler's Third Reich.

There is a photo of a group of inmates, standing around and smiling, in front of the main gate, from which the machine guns have just been removed. They were fortunate to be able to stand around, and to smile, because these were very recent arrivals, not yet subjected to Buchenwald's specialties. One of them gave me a piece of German paper money, a Buchenwald Reichsmark, with which the inmates were paid for their labor. These marks were for the purchase of such extras, in the camp store, as butter, sugar, coffee and tobacco. However, there never was, nor had been, any butter, sugar, coffee or tobacco available in the store.

Had the war continued, this group of inmates would inevitably have ended up looking like the group of bodies stacked like cord wood against the outer wall of the crematorium. These are bodies awaiting their turn to be burned to ashes, cremated, in the four specially designed ovens inside the building—built in Weimar, by the way. They bodies were stacked head to foot, to prevent the stack from toppling. Tattooed identification numbers may be seen. Every inmate of a concentration camp was permanently marked in this way. You will recall that these people were forced to work at hard labor so long as they had sufficient strength. That strength was slowly but deliberately and surely taken from them by the enforced diet, which was scientifically designed to be just below the minimum required to sustain life. As you can see, they were finally reduced to what is plainly skin and bone. A person in that condition cannot walk or even sit up. We saw them, in what was reported to be the "hospital", an ordinary wooden one-story barracks with six-foot deep shelves, four high, against the walls, and a single wood table in the aisle, holding a filthy half-bottle of what looked like iodine and some filthy rags – the total extent of their medical supplies for this "hospital"—and them lying on the shelves, in rags, with about a foot of space each, with no covers, moaning, dying or dead. There were many, many dead. Buchenwald executed some 56,000 people. There were about 17,000 there when our First Army liberated the camp. They were dying at the rate of 700 per day, of starvation and exposure, and disease. The crematorium could not accommodate that many, so that many were buried in mass graves, or, in the end, just dumped into the quarries that they had worked. The smell of death, once experienced, is never forgotten. The smell of death permeated the camp of Buchenwald, and was carried downwind for miles. The people of Weimar must sure have smelled it, when the wind was right.

The bodies shown stacked against the crematorium wall are

only a small fraction of those that were there when we (the Battalion C.O. and myself) first visited the camp. There was also a very large wooden farm wagon standing nearby, which had just returned from its daily collection tour of the camp and was stacked with about fifty bodies.

As soon as the First U.S. Army, of which we were a part, liberated this area, a full Army Field Hospital unit was ordered into Buchenwald, to treat the sick and starving, save those that could be saved, feed and clothe and care for all of the inmates, and provide for necessary sanitation, clothing, housing and medical help. The dead were buried with appropriate ceremony and respect.

Nevertheless, in order to preclude forever the possibility that these horrible deeds. Might some day in the future be explained away as mere rumors and war stories, as had happened after World War I, General Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, ordered that a portion of the bodies remain as they were found, until U.S. Senators, Congressmen, other officials, and reporters, cameramen, and others could be brought from the U.S., to document for all time exactly how it was.

The above picture became famous world-wide by *Life* magazine photographers. This exposure is by George Nejdl, from the 602nd collection. Except for the wreaths on the walls, which were placed there by sympathetic inmates and visitors, these

bodies lie as they were found, and are what were saved for the documentation. It was at this time, several days after our first visit, that I again visited the camp, with our Battalion photographer, Mr. George Nejdl, to make his record.

Now there were several ways in which the inmates of Buchenwald died. In this camp there were no gas chambers. Most commonly, they starved. But many were hung. Hanging was a favorite SS method of execution. A short leather loop was used. With the loop around his neck, the victim was hoisted to an iron hook, slightly higher than a man, and left to strangle. The crematorium building was surrounded by a concrete area, and enclosed by a high wooden board fence that could not be seen through. Inside this fence there stood a simple scaffold. It didn't have to be much, because the bodies were so light. It consisted only of a base, with two upright two-by-fours and a crosspiece at the top. This two-by-four crosspiece held six equally spaced small iron hooks. It could thus accommodate six hangings at once. How many times it was loaded during a day probably depended on how hast the ovens inside could process the bodies.

There was another method, presumably reserved for special

cases. It was innocent in appearance, but devilish in application. Near the wall of the crematorium there was a round hole in the concrete, covered by an iron “manhole” cover. And indeed this was a “manhole”. The hole extended vertically to the level of the building’s basement floor. There a horizontal hole extended through the building’s foundation, into the basement. The victim was led to the manhole and forced to jump in. He was then covered by the manhole cover. His only avenue of escape was by crawling along the horizontal tunnel, into the building. As he emerged from the tunnel into the basement, one of the guards or “operators”, standing there in wait, with a large wooden club, shaped exactly like a potato masher—having a large lump on the business end—smashed his skull with a heavy blow to the back of the head. We personally observed this club, leaning against the white painted wall of the basement, near the tunnel. It was covered with blood, brains and hair on the large end.

Victims were also hung in the basement. There were about six iron “meat hook”-like hooks attached to the white concrete walls. The walls beneath them were disfigured by the frantic kicking and scratching of the men who had been hung on them. Several of the leather strangulation lops lay about. [**Editor's Note:** when I visited this basement room in 2013 with my daughter, I could not help imagining my father visiting here, in this same spot in April 1945 and what his feelings were.]

In the basement were two other elements of the process. One was a white metal table, like an operating table. It held the body of the newly executed, while the teeth were knocked out, to recover any gold or other valuable metals. Here also, all clothes were removed. The other was an elevator, with a special sliding table. The body was placed on this table, and when called for from above, the elevator carried it upward, into the main crematorium, positioning it directly in front of the appropriate oven, emptied the body on the grate, and retracted. The door was

then closed and the fire applied.

Ashes were shaken into a separate small room in the basement. These ashes were later used as fertilizer, in the fields and gardens in the surrounding countryside. A small metal box, about a foot square, was used to measure this issue, and appears on the floor of the ashes.

As mentioned earlier, the ovens had been specially designed and built for the purposes which have been described. The entire crematorium had been kept clean, painted white inside, with a neat and orderly appearance, no doubt to aid in an orderly and efficient operation.

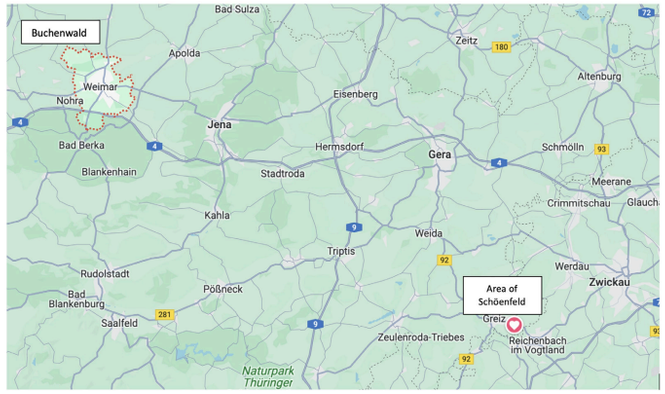
Now, a crematorium in itself, while gruesome in its detail, is not an unusual thing. Every city probably has one, to accommodate those who prefer that their bodies be cremated after death, instead of being buried. But Buchenwald had either sour or sig, and it is the inhuman motive of exterminating entire races of people, genocide, that we abhor. It was a common saying among inmates, that: “You enter Buchenwald through the gate, but you leave through the chimney.” And 56,000 people did.

Converted to tape for the Seventh Grade of the
Harrisburg, Illinois School, 1979

Martin J. Damgaard Annandale, Virginia

Editor Reflection: Each of the bodies of the killed shown was an individual adult, with the right to life, his own life story, a heritage, a family and most probably a faith. These seem lost in the surreal tragedy and evil of their deaths. There is no greater human sadness.

Editor Note:
It is unclear where “Schoenenfeld” was or just a MJD gloss. There are at least 8 Schöenfeld’s in Germany today. The nearest to Weimar and Buchenwald is about 45 miles to the south east. As the Buchenwald concentration camp had numerous “sub-camps” it seems likely that this was the location of what MJD described for some of the photos.



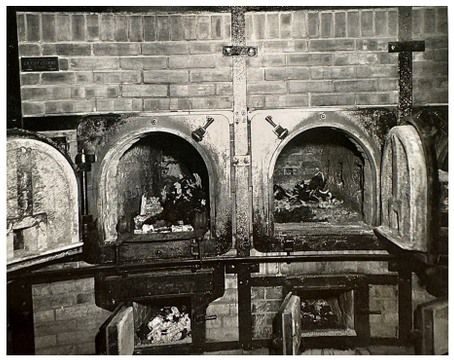
It is ironic that today, “Schöenfeld” (“beautiful field”) presents a beautiful pastoral scene:

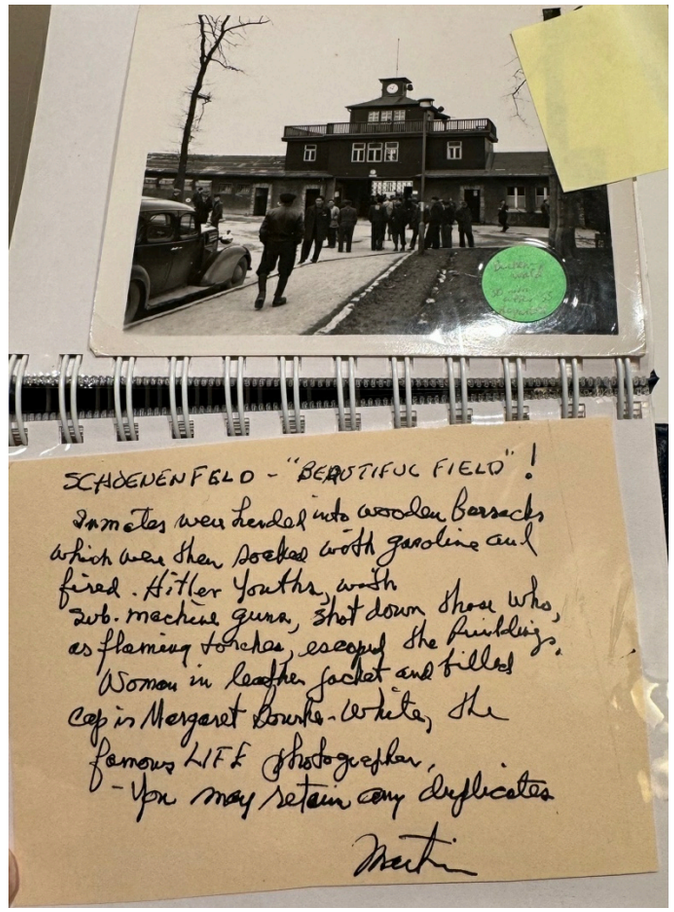
Following are some of MJD’s picture set from in and near to Buchenwald, and from “Schoenenfeld” (as he referred to):

Outside Weimar which is just south of Buchenwald. The downed plane is of interest due to its camouflage pattern.

Life magazine photographer, Margaret Bourke-White in 1937 in NYC and in April 1945 in Buchenwald

What the liberating soldiers found




SCHOENENFELD - "BEAUTIFUL FIELD"!
Inmates were herded into wooden barracks
which were then doused with gasoline and
fired. Hitler Youths, with
sub. machine guns, shot down those who,
as flaming torches, escaped the buildings.
Woman in leather jacket and billed
cap is Margaret Bourke-White, the
famous LIFE photographer.
- You may retain any duplicates
Martin

Buchenwald main gate on Day 1 of liberation--April 11, 1945 and Martin Damgaard's note about "Schoenenfeld" and pictures

The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Memorial at Buchenwald today. He was imprisoned here but killed finally at Flossenbürg. His burial site is unknown.

Editor's Note: While gruesome, the pictures included here are a muted sampling of the wider horror that the whole set presents of the camps and the Holocaust. We can only hope that history itself will vindicate and not diminish the lessons learned, the suffering experienced and the inevitability of Justice.

I learned of these pictures when young by finding them in my father's sock drawer. I "borrowed" them one day while I was in the sixth grade and took them to school for "show and tell". The SHOW part was enough to earn a phone call to my mother at home. That evening--me having replaced the photos back into his sock drawer after school--my father asked me if I had taken them? When I admitted that I had, he simply asked me what I thought of them. An explanation followed and his tale. That occasion was my introduction to the horror of the Holocaust; 1963, just 18 years after V.E. Day.

ESSAY THREE

TO THE MEMBERS OF MRS. GERTRUDE
CARR'S 7TH GRADE CLASS,
HARRISBURG, ILL.

Martin Damgaard 1 May 1980

Some time back I submitted, for your consideration, a tape to accompany photos sent earlier [**Note:** his collection was about 25 photos] - which described the Nazi death camp named Buchenwald, located just outside the city of Weimar, Germany, and the manner in which we of the 1st Army encountered it. Each of you wrote a note to me, commenting on the tape, and all of the notes were complimentary. I do truly appreciate your efforts in doing that, and I thank each of you. What a fine group of young Americans. I also commend you, and your School Board, on the good judgment you showed, just at the time when good citizenship is formed, in selecting your "pull-no-punches" and "tell-it-like-it-is" teacher. Would that we all could have been so fortunate.

I have since done some thinking about the intellectual upheaval, now somewhat subsided, that swept the country in the wake of the “Holocaust” program, and have arrived at some further considerations which I pass on to you now. Things which must be said, which may not have been told, about the unspeakable horrors the Nazi death camps, Buchenwald, Belsen, Auschwitz, and the rest, and why they happened at all.

American soldiers who fought in the European Theater of Operations, in World War II, and who uncovered, liberated, saw, smelled and recorded these horrors, remember them as part of

their wartime experiences, which indeed they were. Had it not been for the war which brought us there, we, and the world, may have remained long in ignorance of them. As much as a large part of the indigenous German population who, although aware of stories and rumors, and of the unexplained disappearances of friends, neighbors and family members, nevertheless were never told exactly what had happened. Nor were they allowed to approach closely enough to any of these sites to gain first-hand knowledge of what was occurring there.

In consequence, those who now hear and read such history, inevitably, and correctly, associate the entire subject with the period of the Second World War. The automatic, but erroneous, assumption which often evolves is that this program of Adolph Hitler's, for the mass extinction of many millions of ordinary people, this "final solution" for the "purification" of the human race, conducted while Germany was at war, was, in fact, a part of Hitler's and Germany's war effort.

And that is not so.

What we forget to think through to, and what might be said, is that this entire historical entity - the authorization, planning, funding, organization, manning and implementation - was conceived and executed as an integral component of the internal and peacetime government of Germany and its conquered peoples. Peacetime. The fact that it happened during a period of war was, while perhaps not coincidental, at least irrelevant. This was the way that Hitler and his henchmen thought and believed that Germany, and whatever peoples they might conquer, should be made to live, forever. In War and Peace.

The camps were never intended to be terminated, but to continue until all Jews, "undesirables" and dissidents had been totally eliminated. And of course, under their system, there would never be an end to the supply of undesirables and

dissidents, so that the system would remain, permanently, a basic part of the internal management of the German people.

Now stop and think about what that really means. Think of your own home town. Think of an al1-powerful elite police force, just there, in southern Illinois, say in Harrisburg. Not subject to re-appointment or election every few years, nor to dismissal, nor impeachment. Not subject to anything that ordinary citizens can do. Think of them arriving at your house in the middle of any night say at 2:00 a.m. Not ringing the bell or knocking politely, but pounding the door down with rifle butts, and stamping in, grabbing your Mom and Dad, and maybe your sister and Grandma, and hustling them out to a van, driving away, without any explanation, and giving not even a chance to say goodbye. You yourself can add the rest. The fright, the worry and anguish. You can imagine the camp, just there on the edge of town, from which awful smells emit, and from which none return. And not only there in your town. In all towns. And in all cities. Everywhere. That, young ladies and gentlemen, is what Hitler had in store for us. Remember, he boasted: "Today Germany. Tomorrow, the Whole World".

Think on a little further. As awful as it seems, still, you say, all that was quite a long time ago, in an earlier generation, and a different era, and not part of the real world today. After all, it is only history, now. Right? No. Wrong. Wrong. It didn't stop with Hitler. The principle of physically eliminating the opposition lives on as government policy in some countries existing today. After World War II, Stalin had his camps and purges. Later, Krushchev had his. Idi Amin, in Uganda, slaughtered thousands of his own people, just a few years ago. Observe also the Cambodian refugee situation. A case of absolute genocide, ongoing. Now. And in Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini, as soon as he came to power, immediately proceeded to cause numerous of his predecessor's staff and followers to be summarily executed. The methods of death may be different, and the programs on a

smaller scale, but the intentions and the result, for those out of favor, are the same. The principle is: kill all those who disagree.

And so now, take a good look around you. Are your classmates healthy? Well fed? Well clothed? Good shoes? Have any of them, or their families, or yours, been spirited away in the night lately? Is there a stinking camp on the outskirts of Harrisburg? If Kennedy or Reagan were to be elected, do you expect that Jimmy Carter and his Cabinet, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would be executed forthwith? Of course not. After all, you say, this is America. We Americans won't let it be that way here. And that is certainly true. But it's like this, here, because a great many good men and women, over the last two hundred years, worked hard, and fought hard, to make it and keep it so.

So study hard, young gentlemen and ladies, and do your best always, because in a very few short years it will all be yours to work for, and yea, if necessary, to fight for.

Martin J. Damgaard
LTC CE USAR Ret.
Annandale, Virginia

Thank you for your kind attention.

George Carr T-5, 602nd Engineer Camouflage Battalion

ESSAY FOUR

On the Prospect of a Faithless Death of a Loved One

Neil Damgaard October 2023

Here is a thing I do not want to think about, nor do I have much experience with it, to date: a much-loved child, parent, spouse, brother or sister who dies and in dying they gave no evidence at all of any faith in Jesus Christ. They might even have been very plain in their rejection of the Gospel. What does it mean? It may seem like a rude, unfeeling subject to explore in this collection of essays. And for some readers it might even be offensive to imagine that judgement might reside--or that anyone might imagine its residence--in the future of those who reject Christ. But this question calls me to address it.

I write about death because:

- It is a reality for every human being
- Like nothing else it creates an aloneness for those left behind
- What happens immediately after death is an unknown thing, except for its finality
- The Bible frequently illustrates and describes it
- The Bible addresses it honestly and in a forthright way
- The Bible offers assurances about an afterlife, though not for all
- The Bible addresses human death in the context of faith in Christ or its absence
- Most of us will go to great ends to postpone it as long

as possible
- Sadly, it is self-inflicted today at an increasing rate
- It can be brutal
- It's tragic magnitude in history at times of war is incomprehensible
- When it is accompanied by Christian faith, it is contextualized with a feeling of hope that is engendered and which can be matched by no other human joy
- At some point it dawns upon people that their own death is closer than ever before
- It requires courage to face – our own and those of loved ones
- I am aware of a certain kind of profound ministry that has risen, to provide someone to simply be <u>with</u> a dying person who has no other family or friends in their dying hours

Loss through death sets off a varied set of feelings, depending on the specific relationship that was lost to us. Parents leave a great grief for most when they die, but we can rationalize a loss of them to a small degree even if they showed no interest or belief in Christ. We might mutter, "Well they had their chance."

Siblings and spouses are roughly in the same place—each has our great love, long term partnership, affection, shared experiences and common family members. If they died with Christ, we grieve the loss but we also know where they are, that we shall somehow see them again and we find it also gracing us with a close sense of God's imminence, because the Lord Jesus <u>is</u> close. We remind ourselves that God knows how we feel in the loss. He lost His Son. He lost His bride (to sin) but then the Son rescued the bride. Somehow perhaps, even if the loss itself is excruciating and bewildering, and responsible for inflicting a loneliness into our lives that we hate, still, there is some strange comfort. I don't know this scenario myself so I can only humbly

guess here.

Loss of a spouse owns its own unique sense of loss, joined with many different factors. This kind of loss rudely thrusts these things upon the remaining one:

- A terrible and significant change of lifestyle, routine, friends known as a couple, financial and business partnerships lost, roles previously done by the deceased that now need to be learned, vacation habits, holidays, unfulfilled commitments, unaddressed or incomplete tensions, "unfinished" family relationships which were not satisfactorily resolved, inheritance questions, etc. etc.
- Quiet. There is a deafening silence where the voice, laughter, humor, rants, opinions, etc. used to be routine. Now that voice is gone. For some this is the hardest adjustment.
- Bewilderment. For most, the loss of a spouse is a new experience. It can't be prepared for. The bereaved is struck with a disorientation which lasts for an amount of time. It is hard to predict for how long?

If a spouse or a sibling is lost without faith in Christ, we would prayerfully grapple with this still. We would give the lost to a just and loving Providence, entrusting them to Him as the one who *doeth all things well.* Such a moment is perhaps one of the greatest exercises of faith and trust possible for a human soul.

But I think the loss of a child, specifically an adult child, to death with no profession of faith in Christ is a terror we loathe to imagine; although many believers have born this particular loss. This scenario challenges our theology in the most intense way and we are haunted with any if not all of the following questions:

- How could this happen? A bewilderment and overwhelming sadness.
- Maybe my theology is wrong?
    - This, it seems, is a temptation to many in this dilemma. And making an adaptive change to one or another basic theological tenet has been done more than a few times. At the same time, it is possible that even in the mind of genuine believers in Christ that their *soteriology* (the theology of salvation) might be defective on some points. The honest and teachable believer is always open to biblical refinements to his or her theology, "fine-tuning".
- Maybe they secretly DID believe and trust in Christ?
    - And I would concede this possibility often to grieving parents.
- Perhaps my Christian parenting was off balance and at least in part their lack of saving faith is my fault?
    - Fault-finding is a common enough thing. Let's agree that none of us were perfectly balanced, always-gracious parents. We must always give our parenting, marital partnering, singleness over to the providence and grace of God. We do this repeatedly.
- How do I make sense of a childhood profession of faith, abandoned or later contradicted?
    - Ultimately, we must leave to the good and just God that we know and love to sort these dynamics out, and to vindicate, honor and recompense as He sees fit.

Does Scripture address the specific scenario of a saving-faithless death of a loved one? In answering this matter, I think the

answer is both "no" and "yes."

"**No**" in that the text of the biblical writings does not usually answer to our queries in a linearly Western-thinking way. Our theology is a two-millennium refinement of thinking, writing and debating. We tend to want quick, theologically sophisticated answers to questions. And there are surely some biblical exposés like that: Romans and Galatians, for instance. The Epistle to the Hebrews also presents a lengthy logical argument as to why defection from a previous faith in Christ is a frighteningly hopeless decision. But the bulk of biblical material is not written in that manner but with other literary flavors—all Jewish, ancient and heavy with an emphasis on history and biography—not so much with a modern American Q&A motif.

"**Yes**" in that, to our comfort, some questions in life are indeed directly illustrated and perhaps answered by a biblical writer. In Romans 9:19 and the sticky question of predestination, Paul anticipates the fair if difficult question, "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?'" At least we find some satisfaction in the fact that the Scripture does recognize the question. Although the biblical writers thought, wrote and were inspired 3,500 to 2,000 years ago, they're wonderfully synchronized with at least some of our modern inquiries. Jesus was asked about marriage in the afterlife—a great question! Peter and Paul both address questions about marriage, church leadership, persecution and money. And as a timeless human reality, sex and sexuality certainly finds no vacuum in Scripture. So, we can imagine that sometime, there might have been questions to the biblical authors about the loss of a beloved child. And even with the Lord Jesus Christ physically present, or miraculous signs and wonders wrought by His apostles, given to authenticate the veracity of the Gospel, there was still unbelief. Or just disbelief. So, on just a human-experience level, what could be a more urgent or a more passionate query?

We note that there are certainly “hard” deaths in Scripture. The people of the Word of God were not somehow exempt from this great challenge! We read from the earliest pages of the Bible about the death of Able, then the tragic deaths of father and son--Saul and Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, David’s son’s death at the hands of Absalom’s armor-bearers, David’s “love child”, Jairus’ daughter, John the Baptist, Lazarus, Stephen, James, and many others.

It is surely in its own category, but let us not underestimate the trauma Mary felt in watching her Son on the cross. Nor should we imagine that His disciples had any kind of laissez faire resignation or a “whatever” reaction to His death. They were utterly defeated and plainly devastated by the event.

But keeping focus on the point of this essay, we are concerned with the tragedy of knowing that a loved one has died with no love of Christ on their lips. For some of us this is our greatest fear in life. To die with no faith in Christ is for us the darkest end of human life. There can be no greater terror than going into eternity with no Savior in the heart, no sin-bearer, no advocate, no high priest, no blessed hope and no king. It is the ultimate folly and doom, we would say. Who could not dread such a prospect for the child then raised, loved and did their best to give Gospel witness to?

As stated, I do not wish to ponder this calamity. I would rather believe that ultimately, finally, the children of all true believers in Christ will somehow be grafted into the body of Christ by faith though it may be to my eyes inscrutable as to how? But I think this is part fantasy. Some do enter eternity Christless and some of these were born and raised by believers.

I quickly defer to the bulwark of my theology. I believe God is always just. I believe He is always fair. I am persuaded His wrath and justice are met in exact evenness with His love and mercy. I cannot calculate that formula but I believe it is so. No attribute

of God ever bullies another attribute. He is always Who He is and Who He is has always been and always shall be a perfect balance of all His eternal characteristics. I do not know if other religions court such excellence. But our clean, biblical faith describes and articulates such a God. And on this issue, it is no less true. None of us will stand, at any moment of revealing in the future, and evaluate God's judgment as in error. We will praise Him.

It is not a happy thing to ponder any scenario of final judgment to this world at the hands of the consuming fire who is our God (as says Scripture, Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29). We do not apologize for believing in the reality of this doctrine or for God. Scripture forecasts it so clearly. But we would clarify our description of the doctrine with these points:

1. God is not subject to any kind of evolution, improvement, increase in wisdom, advancing or widening of His perspective, collaboration with latter day consultans or time in any sense of the human word.

2. He does not "cut slack" or lessen His own understanding of or relation to human evil.

3. He does not forget wickedness because of failing memory or take it lightly.

4. He does not weigh or balance human good works against human sin in any jurisprudent way.

5. He does not change His mind and He cannot be given further wisdom or insight. His knowledge, wisdom and judgment are without end, without boundary and altogether excellent.

6. He does not limit His wrath only to those with whom humans judges might concur with or judge to be worthy of it. In perfect joining with His holiness, His wrath is a consuming fire.

7. He is not nor ever has been challenged by the devil.

8. He is not out-thought by any angelic delegation, let alone by any human symposium, alliance or conspiracy.

9. He is not persuaded by any sacrifice other than that perfect and beautiful atonement given on Golgotha by His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, at its properly fixed point in time.

10. His glory is in no way diminished in any way by His execution of any judgment.

11. His judgment will be excellently just--utterly, finally and and completely fair in His evaluations and in the execution of any of His plans.

12. His *jurisprudentia* will be wonderful, and finally indisputable without hesitation or uncertainty.

We observe these reactions among believers at the loss of loved ones to death:

A. We feel confidence to express to the Lord the full range of feelings and to express our grief openly at the loss.
B. We pray, even in loss – not efficaciously—but openly and with courage. These times of prayer will be some of the most intense and spiritually rich intervals of prayer that a believer might ever experience.
C. We entrust the dead one to our God, whose love and power and sovereignty are so wonderful. We comfort ourselves with the compassion of God.
D. We honor the dead in how we speak of them, even in loss. Even in continuing in prayer about them, not to somehow alter their fate, but to tell our Savior how we interpreted them and that we thank Him for their having been in our my lives.
E. We understand that none of us can estimate just *how*

gracious the Lord truly is and we carefully respect *how little* we can truly discern, how poorly we might estimate the genuine condition of the human heart with regards to will, faith and belief. This is a vastly important point and should not be forgotten.
F. We realize that no one's opportunity to believe is over until they breathe their last. We are aware of no Scriptural support at all which offers post-death redemption for a human soul except in those very special instances when the Lord Jesus Himself raised or called back to life a person from the dead (Moses and Elijah, Lazarus, Jairus' daughter etc. The sanctity of human life is not revealed beyond death.
G. We retreat into a moment of objectivity that statistically a certain number WILL die without Christ, even with a Christian upbringing, knowledge of Scripture and many Christian friends. There have been and will continue to be people who had every opportunity and might even have manifested some intimate acquaintance with the goodness of God, and yet finally rejected the Gospel.
H. Some people do apostasize. This is something of a mystery, always. How can a human being have some genuine and true knowledge of the true God, the plan of redemption, the testimony of other believers and perhaps some personal experience of blessing *from* other believers, seem to embrace that same faith at some point and then finally, to abandon it? It is the greatest kind of irrationality a human can perform.

Finally, Christians who find themselves bearing this loss, can perhaps look at these coping tools:

- They need to always fall back to a good biblical theology. Bad or poor theology never serves us well. A solidly biblical, non-superstitious and adequately

sober-minded reaction to such a grief, is well placed.

- They need to lean on other believers and if possible, partner with them to mutually pray for each other's loved ones to come to Christ in saving faith.
- They need to talk about it. Here is where Christian fellowship at its most authentic expression, can be most precious and meaningful. We do not need to endure such a loss alone.
- They need to give the loved one and their destiny over to the Sovereign Lord just as (if not more) intently than on the day that loved one was presented in dedication as a child.
- They need to beware of the temptation to interpret the unbelief of the loved one as indelibly connected to how well "I, as the Christian parent, raised them." To be sure, how we performed, the choices and strategies we employed in Christian parenting, have various effects. Most of us did the best we knew how. But there will be cracks, inadequacies, inconsistencies, poor judgment and all manner of other failings in most Christian parents. We pray for God's gracious provision to us for wisdom, forgiveness, patience, the ability to keep the door open to our children and for years.
- Ultimately the human soul is called to believe himself or herself on Christ as the one Savior, the sure anchor and completely efficacious giver of redemption to all who will trust in Him.

There is almost always **hope** in the walk of faith. We are often confronted with challenges--physical, spiritual, emotional and relational. Things don't go very often as they are theoretically supposed to go. This includes the raising of children within the faith of their parents and grandparents. But there is always a hope for the unfolding of time to generate circumstances that marvelously produce real faith in Christ. That faith does not

have to be complicated or deeply informed; just real and focused on the cross of Christ and His empty tomb. Such faith has not rarely occurred late in life and even near to its end. This is not just a fantasy. I have observed it on several occasions. Conversely, the black head of an embittered and a complete rejection, denial and disdain for Christ is rare to observe.

It is a feature of our faith system and our theology. The grace of God and the Gospel are the wondrous "crown jewels" of what we believe, what we announce, what we explain and what we preach. But the cost of rejecting the News is terrible. And almost unimaginable as potentially relevant for people we love and care about. May the God of all grace and mercy extend His saving faith and goodness to all our loved ones.

We do not cite Scripture like calling up magical incantations. We remember Scripture from its deliberate and very human authors, addressing matters of life and death with the power of divine authority. Paul wrote to the early Christians in the ancient Greek city of Corinth:

> For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened —not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2nd Corinthians 5:1-8)

I end this essay with words which are the bedrock of Christian hope. I believe they are solidly trustworthy, despite which individual embraces them and which does not. Each passage is given a, interpretive summary statement. These New Testament verses also bring some sense of comfort about death to those who have trusted Christ… These eventualities are never promised in Scripture to anyone who does not trust Christ although they may be hijacked by many modern preachers, singers, philosophers and otherwise Christless folk.

Some might cast these observations as things which will occur for all people of faith in Christ immediately after they die (which I would interpret as true too):

A. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. (Luke 16:22). ANGELS USHER SOME SOULS TO HEAVEN

B. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2nd Corinthians 5:6-8). SOME IMMEDIATELY ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE

C. There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue,

for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31) THERE IS A STATE OF BEING CONSIOUS, IN COMMAND OF YOUR THINKING AND FEELING, SPEECH, AND MEMORIES

D. Revelation chapters 4 and 5 SOME PARTICIPATE IN MAGNIFICENT WORSHIP WITH ANGELS AND BELIEVERS BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD AND CHRIST

E. When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:9,10) SOME ARE AWARE TO SOME DEGREE OF ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS ON EARTH

F. Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the

> mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen. (LUKE 9:28-36)
> SOME WILL RECOGNIZE AND COMMUNICATE WITH BELIEVERS WHO PRECEDED THEM TO HEAVEN

Jesus told two parables relating to prayer, recorded by Luke in Luke 18. The final remark, by Jesus, seems to summarily characterize the attitude that He was promoting: *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted*. (Luke 18:14b)

Historically *orthodox* Christian thanatology, that which is grounded in Scripture, offers and promises every bit of the joy of redemption to any and all humans who trust in Christ. The benefits of trust in Christ are incalculably effective to the problem of death. It might even extend that assurance to souls who were incapable of intellectual belief—disabled and such. But it offers no hope for any and all who hear the Gospel, understand it and ultimately reject it.

In 1847 a man named Henry Lyte, a Scottish Anglican cleric wrote a song, and died three days after he wrote it. It is called

Abide with Me:

> Abide with me; fast falls the eventide; the darkness deepens; Lord with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, help of the helpless, O abide withe me. Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day; Earth's joys grow dim' it's glories pass away; change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.
>
> Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word, But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord, Familiar, condescending, patient, free. Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.
>
> Come not in terror, as the King of kings, but kind and good, with healing in Thy wings; tears for all woes, a heart for every plea. Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.
>
> Thou on my head in early youth didst smile, and although rebellious and perverse meanwhile, Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee. On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.
>
> I need Thy presence every passing hour, What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power? Who. l;ike Thyself, my guide and stay can be? Through cloud and sunshine, Lord abide with me.
>
> I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless; Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness. Where is death's sting? Where grave, thy victory? I triumph still, abide with me.

> Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes; Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies. Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee; in life and death, O Lord, abide with me.

Sung during the funeral of Queen Elizaneth II, a favorite of Gandhi and thought by Victorian Poet Laureate Alfred Lord Tennyson to be among the finest poems in all the English language.

ESSAY FIVE

On Super Groups, Their Songs and a Few Stories

Neil Damgaard October 2023

I could write a whole book about music! Maybe someday I will. I love music. My Dad used to say "music is mathematics with a soul."

I include here meditations on only a few pieces that have moved me. They may or may not be famous. We don't pick our art for its fame; we pick it for how it affects us. Joy. Sadness. Regret. Confusion. Hunger. Relief and so forth. Instrumental music seems to me a level beyond a vocal song. That is poetry with accompaniment. An instrumental piece communicates by itself with no intellectual message. It has to get the job done on its own. We selected J.S. Bach's *The Little* from the Anna Magdalena Notebook for our wedding processional. There was no content-based preaching in that tune but it communicated grace and beauty on its own, which Renée personified!

I was born to music in the very early 1960s with a gift to me by my parents of a small, **Panasonic transistor radio.** I listened to WEAM, WPGC, later WHFS and WMOD and other Washington area stations. I learned about Peter, Paul and Mary and Rick Nelson and a few other singers before the "British Invasion" (1964). Much later I discovered Doo Wop and loved it!

With the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, music exploded for many of us. It was ubiquitous, endlessly lovely, romantic, silly, fun, bonding between us and later excitedly political and even

spiritual. From 1965 on, we "rode the music." In high school I loved the Beatles, the Jefferson Airplane, the Moody Blues, Richie Havens, Steve Miller Band, Tim Buckley, Mother Earth (with Tracy Nelson) and many other groups and single vocalists. These all followed my Motown phase when I latched on to The Temptations, The Four Tops, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles and The Supremes. All through high school my parents let me move the family "**Hi Fi"**, which was a big piece of furniture, up to my room for the month of December. I loved that and reveled briefly to have something of greater fidelity available for my personal use!

In my college days, having a first-rate **stereo system**, moving it back home in the summers and between dormitory rooms, upgrading pieces from time to time, competing with friends about equipment, learning terms like "frequency response," "signal-to-noise ratio," a "tangentially tracked" stylus in the cartridge, groaning from fidelity-loss when we went to cassettes, and so the manufacturers learned to capitalize on us with introduction of better tape: Chromium Dioxide, partially metallic (is that where the term *Metallica* came from?) etc. Those were the "high times" of music for me. And **concerts** were Quests for Higher Consciousness. Or so we thought. So I attended concerts by Jefferson Airplane (and later Starship), Crosby/Stills/Nash/Young, Poco, Jethro Tull, Canned Heat, She Na Na, The Association, Don McLean, Goose Creek Symphony, The Yes, Lighthouse, Blood Sweat & Tears, Chicago, Alice Cooper, Hot Tuna, Steve Miller Band, Nils Lofgren, Savoy Brown, Santana, Neil Diamond, Beach Boys, Peter/Paul & Mary, Renaissance, etc.

And when I dramatically came to spiritual faith at 19, I felt the need (no one told me to do this) to rid myself of all (well almost all) my rock and roll music. A couple of hundred vinyl record albums given away, sold, discarded, to be replaced by what I thought was an acceptable and

more spiritual alternative—**classical music.** And so, I acquired perhaps a hundred new classical albums as I learned about Bach, Chopin, Mozart, Bruckner, Tchaikovsky, Mendelson, Mussorgsky (whom I came to love), and on and on (all white males, by the way.) And there was no "contemporary" Christian music yet; anything "Christian" was basically an embarrassment. So I went to lots of symphonic productions, chamber music performances and piano recitals and took every undergraduate non-technical course in music at Virginia Tech that was then offered. My august instructors were Virginia Whitehurst, Victor Dyni and Richard Cole. Then I discovered **Maranatha! Music**, Larry Norman and Keith Green. They were followed by several concerts by Phil Keaggy, Twila Paris, Resurrection Band (Rez Band) and B.J. Thomas (himself a new Christian). And as for Christmas music, my awareness goes back to earliest childhood (mid 1950s). I would say at present that my favorite two Christmas songs are the 1958 *Ring the Bells* (by Harry Bollback) and *In the Bleak Midwinter* (from the 1872 poem by 42 year old Londoner Christina Rosetti with 1906 tune added by Gustav Holst). Songs at Christmas with just a touch of sadness--Victorian like--appeal to me.

The songs that follow though, in this little essay, are mostly much newer. And all of them can be heard (and watched) on YouTube today. With greatly depleted hearing today, now I will sit and listen to these videos with headphones—one after another, through an iPad. Gone are my days of OCD high fidelity listening! I begin with Wilson Phillips.

Wilson Phillips – this group is made up of Chynna who is the daughter of John and Michelle Phillips (of the Mamas & the Papas) and Carnie and Wendy Wilson, who are the daughters of Beach Boys Brian Wilson and Marilyn Rovell (of the Honeys). Of several of their songs that I like (which includes their cover of Fleetwood Mac's *Go Your Own Way*), I list here their song ***Flesh and Blood.*** The 1992 song served as a powerful testimony to the

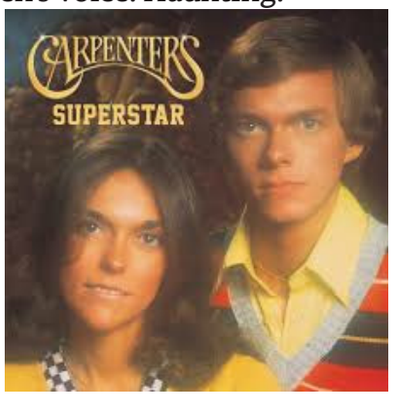
damage done to the children of addicts—even when the children themselves have their own problems. This is perhaps the most personal song released by Wilson Phillips, and it clearly refers to Carnie and Wendy Wilson's distant and strained relationship with their father, Beach Boys front man Brian Wilson, who long suffered mental problems stemming from childhood trauma inflicted by his abusive father. On the bright side, Brian Wilson eventually recovered and he and his daughters reconciled, sometimes performing together. Musically, it is a beautiful, harmonious and quiet ballad. It moves me every time I watch it. The video version focuses on the singers' faces and expressions with good effect. As a father of two daughters myself perhaps this is why this song hits me so hard. My girls were ten and eight when this song was released. Raw, deeply felt emotion. It also somehow reflects my own deep feelings for my late father.

Note: in more recent times, Chynna has become a person of Christian faith. She is married to actor William Baldwin and they have 3 children. The group's version of Brian Wilson's brilliant *God Only Knows* with Carnie doing lead vocal, is also great! (The Beach Boys *Pet Sounds* album on which *God Only Knows* first appeared, is an all-time favorite.)

The Seekers always made me feel happy. The group formed in 1962 in Melbourne, Australia and sang together for the better part of 57 years. The group's female vocalist, Judith Durham, died in 2022 at 79. Their songs *Georgy Girl*, *We Are Australian* and ***There'll Never Be Another You*** impressed me for a purity and elegance. Durham's voice was undiminished over the years. The Seekers gave a wonderful farewell performance in 2019 and

Durham remains one of my all-time favorite female vocalists, along with Marilyn McCoo and Karen Carpenter.

Many of us learned of the **Carpenters** in 1970 with their two songs *Close to You* and *We've Only Just Begun*. Karen's voice is probably the richest and warmest female singing voice I have ever heard. Of all their hits—she died in 1983 at just 32 years old (the week Renée and I arrived to begin thirty-six years in Dartmouth, Massachusetts) the song I loved most was ***Superstar***, for Karen's voice. Haunting.



If the Carpenters were viewed as far-right music, nothing could be more divergent in my musical tastes than far-left San Francisco supergroup, ***The Jefferson Airplane***. But--as powerful as her voice was, and as sultry as she appeared, Grace Slick herself doesn't make my list of favorite female vocalists. She was good. But the song that always grabbed me was written by Slick's one-time husband Paul Kantner who collaborated with David Crosby to write ***Wooden Ships***. *We are leaving, you don't need us*, Grace sang.

I saw Jefferson Airplane in concert in Baltimore. Then I saw an Airplane subgroup, *Hot Tuna* in Washington and personally met Jack Casady, Jorma Kaukonen (who were both *from* D.C.) and drummer Joey Covington. Then once more—I attended the Portuguese Feast in New Bedford and saw *Jefferson Starship* with Casady, Kantner and Marty Balin and a Grace Slick stand-in Diana Mangano, on July 30th 1998.

Good friend and fellow Airplane fan Mike Spoor sought for me, and obtained the souvenir photo which hangs in my office, signed *to the Preacherman*, To Neil, by Kantner, Mangano, Casady and Balin. It is a treasure to me.

Crosby, Stills, Nash also recorded this song on their first album as Crosby was a co-author of the song.

As a footnote, there were two short songs on Kantner/Slick's *Sunfighter* album, entitled ***Diana Part 1*** and ***Diana Part 2*** which I always loved. These are not in tribute to Diana Mangano but to Diana Oughton, a radical terrorist who died on March 6th, 1970 while constructing a nail bomb. When I think back to those months, it makes me sad. So much anger was being lived out and they were not simple times… Kent State really caused a lot of cultural damage.

I also always loved ***We Can Be Together*** off the Airplane's *Volunteers* album. It captured the idealistic/idyllic flavor of the hippie/counter culture movement. It was also laced with anger but also a hope for better times.

In August 1968 the Beatles released ***Hey Jude***. How could I *not* include one Beatles song in this list? They were admittedly, probably my favorite group of all time. *Hey Jude* was their first release on Apple. I remember listening to it on my record player, in the dormer to my bedroom in Annandale, looking out the window and loving the moment. I purchased it at the *Drug Fair* for a dollar probably. I still have the 45 rpm record.

For a long time, I wondered who was being mourned? I learned that the song was written for Julian Lennon, sad about John's leaving his mother, Cynthia, for Yoko Ono. That made me sad and it diminished my feelings about the song for a while. But the song became so very important in the whole Beatles ethos. The promotional film (video) from September of '68, of the song is incredible. Way ahead of its time. It was also the Beatles' first foray into 8-track recording technology. Julian is now 60 and Paul, who wrote the song, is now 81.

Great song writing often draws upon **great story telling**. Songs of this venue that come to mind include Gordon Lightfoot's 1976 ***The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald***, Sandy Denny's 1967

Who Knows Where the Time Goes (the version of which I first heard was recorded by Judy Collins), the story behind Horatio Spafford's 1873 ***It is Well with My Soul***, and Lighthouse's ***1849*** (1970):

The horns *intro* always impresses me in this song!
I used one minute of it as a sermon intro one time!

Wagons rolled out under darkened skies
The sun refused to shine
Four-hundred people full of hopes and dreams
In 1849
They waved goodbye, women dried their tears

I would think of my grandparents with the song *1849*, born in 1869 and 1870 who emigrated to the U.S. (by sea of course) from Denmark in around 1890.

For me three of **Dan Fogelberg's** three 1981 songs, ***Leader of the Band, Same Old Lang Syne*** and ***The Innocent Age*** move both my mind and heart. *Leader* is a tribute to Fogelberg's dad, Lawrence Peter Fogelberg, (1911-1982) – a classical pianist and UCLA marching band director. On the three songs' album (also *The Innocent Age,* a double album), the song concludes with a faded in-and-out brief marching band recording, conducted by his father, said the liner notes. *Same Old Lang Syne* is an autobiographical narrative-ballad told in the first person and tells the story of two long-ago romantic interests meeting by chance in a grocery store on Christmas Eve.

He drew inspiration for *The Innocent Age* from Thomas Wolfe's novel *Of Time and the River* and it featured Richie Furay giving background vocal support. I've been a fan of Furay since his Buffalo Springfield days, and into Poco (whom I saw in concert three times). He became a Christian, too.

For all the songs by the **Eagles** that I have liked over the years (which began in 1971 with their cover of Jackson Browne's *Take It Easy*), I have loved Timothy B. Schmit's ***I Can't Tell You Why*** the most, which while I like the 2004 Melbourne Farewell concert version (Steuart Smith, soloist) but my favorite is the original "official video" from 1979. Then, Don Felder was still with the group and his smooth one-minute guitar solo is a favorite solo on guitar for me at 5 minutes into the song. It is simple and rational, elegant and mellow. I always loved Schmit's bass playing—he's my #3 favorite bass player of all time (after McCartney and Casady). But Felder's solo is "how guitar playing should be." IMHO. Frey and Henley both look so relaxed as does Felder in this video. It seems like Schmit just injected some relax into them all and you almost get the idea they were enjoying themselves!

In a tip of my hat to the Christian recording industry and history, I include the late **Keith Green's** 1980 ***I Want to Be More Like Jesus*** from his *So You Want to Go Back to Egypt?* album.

Always moved by this song, I heard it in person in Tyler, Texas with Jim Brinegar in 1981. Green would die the next year in a plane crash. The next morning, I showed up in class at DTS with tears in my eyes. I asked prayer for Melody. The prof didn't know who Keith was…

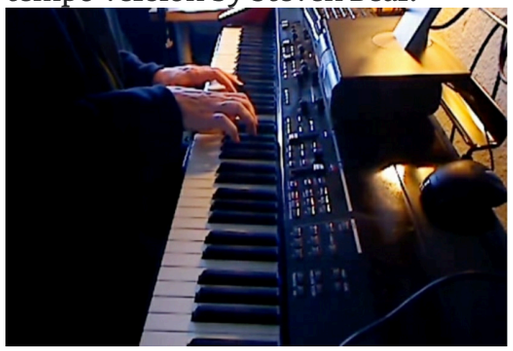
The song is backed on guitar by the great Hadley Hockensmith and vocals by Kelly Willard and Matthew Ward. Bob Dylan also played on the album. It is a seminal and important contribution to the flow of early contemporary Christian music. I remain sad at Keith's seemingly unnecessary death at 28. Even with all the talented Christian singers since then, and many deemed "superstars" now, I still await another Keith to come to minister to us!

My final entry in this essay on music is an instrumental piece. I first heard it as part of the soundtrack to the 1990 Ken Burns mini-series *The Civil War*, in which the song appears 25 times in an 11 hour series. From the Wikipedia article:

Ashoken Farewell is a piece of music composed by the American folk musician Jay Ungar in 1982. For many years, it served as a goodnight or farewell waltz at the annual Ashokan Fiddle & Dance Camps, run by Ungar and his wife Molly Mason, who gave the tune its name, at the Ashokan Field Campus of SUNY New Paltz (now the Ashokan Center) in Upstate New York. The piece is a waltz in D major, composed in the style of a Scottish lament (e.g., Niel Gow's "Lament for His Second

Wife"). Jay Ungar describes the song as coming out of "a sense of loss and longing" after the annual Ashokan Music & Dance Camps ended.

There are many covers of this tune around. My favorite is a slow tempo version by Steven Bear.



I want this piece played at my funeral! It is so beautiful and while not a “Christian” song or a hymn, it is one of those pieces of music that (to me) just somehow breathes spirituality. As does the organ solo in Procul Harem’s *A Whiter Shade of Pale* and Bach’s lovely piece, *The Little.*

God has given many gifts. The gift of music is a favorite of mine!

And as a postscript for this Essay, here is my all-time favorite "album cover":

I was not an overly enthusiastic fan of Lee's music, but this art is cool!

ESSAY SIX

24 Ships of Interest

(And the Titanic is not one of them)

Neil Damgaard October 31st 2023 (Reformation Day)

Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters Psalm 107:23

I have always loved **transportation**. I do not mean bicycles, unicycles, jet packs like what James Bond flew in *Thunderball*, Saturn V boosters, snowmobiles or even, really, automobiles. I mainly mean ships, planes and trains.

As for ships, I have been interested in a few. Here is my list:

Ships of Interest to NCD		My interest
SS Leviathan	1914-1938	Uncle Emil served aboard her, as an oiler
USS Yorktown (CV-10)		Visited in Charleston (1982)
USS Merrimack/CSS Virginia	1855-1862	Famous first clash of ironclads, Hampton Roads VA
USS Monitor	1861-1862 (1973)	Famous first clash of ironclads, Hampton Roads VA
USS Constitution	1797 - present	Jocelyn played aboard her in Boston, Oct 1997
Bismarck	1936-1941	Saw the movie as a child in theater with my father
Scharnhorst	1935-1943	Allegedly chased RMS Mauretania in the north Atlantic
RMS Mauretania	1937-1965	Dad sailed to Liverpool aboard her, Dec 1943
The Mayflower	1609-1624	replica in Plymouth MA
The Fortune and The Anne	1621	Brought second (35) and third (93) rounds of Pilgrims
USS Langley (CV-1)	1922 (1913) - 1942	First American aircraft carrier
USS Enterprise (CV-6)	1936-1947	Grew up hearing about this ship
USS Hornet (CV-8)	1939-1942	Famous for launching the Doolittle Raid; sunk in the Coral Sea
USS Enterprise (CV-65)	1958-2017	Cousin-in-law Rick Parker flew off her
USS Wasp (LHD-1)	1985 to present	Dean Schmidlin and I visited
USS Massachusetts (BB-59)	1939-1962	Mo and I visited on board, 1984
USS Leyte (Essex class CVS 32)	1951	Mo flew off once, Feb 1951 in a TBM Avenger
USS Bagdoeng Strait (CVE-116)	1951	Mo flew TBMs off many times
USS Sicily (CVE-118)	1951	Mo flew TBMs off many times
USS Rendova (CVE-114)	1951	Mo flew TBMs off many times
NS Savanah	1959-1971	Visited in Charleston (1982); Professor Whitelaw designed the reactor
Fehmarn Belt Ferry Ship	2013	rode from Denmark to Germany en route to Berlin
MS Eurodam (Holland America)	launched 2008	Family cruise, Dec. 2013

Certain famous (and worthy) ships are not on my list: Titanic, Lusitania, Roman galleys, HMS Hood, carriers Akagi/Kaga/Hiryu/Soryu, Tirpitz, the Susan Constant/Godspeed/Discovery, HMS Surprise, the Queen Mary or the Yellow Submarine. They are unlisted with me not because they were unimportant ships,

but my list must be modest and every cool ship ever cannot be on the list. So, my list includes 24 ships.

COMPARISON OF SHIPS I LIKE, BY SIZE	Displacement tons
Fortune (Britain)	55
Anne (Britain)	140
Mayflower (Britain)	180
USS Monitor (USN)	776
USS Constitution (USN)	2,200
CSS Virginia (USS Merrimack)	4,000
USS Baedoeng Strait (CVE-116)	10,500
USS Sicily (CVE-118)	11,100
NS Savanah (USMA)	13,600
USS Langley (CV-1)	14,000
Fehmarn Belt Ferry (Scandlines)	15,187
USS Rendova (CVE-114)	24,100
USS Enterprise (CV-6)	25,500
USS Hornet (CV-8)	25,500
USS Leyte (CV-32)	27,000
RMS Mauretania (Cunnard-White Star)	35,738
USS Yorktown (CV-10)	36,380
Scharnhorst (Germany, 3rd Reich)	38,700
USS Wasp (LHD-1)	41,100
USS Massachusetts (BB-59)	45,233
Bismarck (Germany, 3rd Reich)	50,000
SS Leviathan (United States Line)	59,956
MS Eurodam (Holland America)	86,273
USS Enterprise (CV-65)	94,781

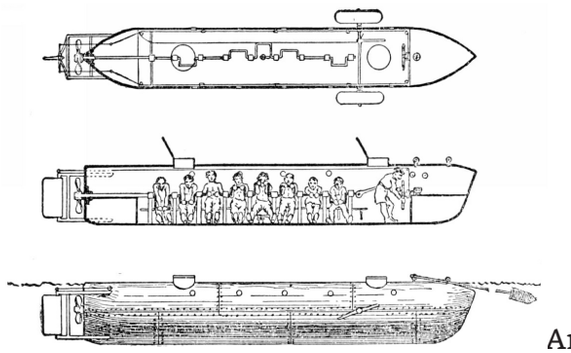
My interest began with my dad's tales to me of his long-lost older brother Emil, who served on SS Leviathan—at the time, the largest ship in the world—as an oiler (a job he had for the Great Northern Railroad previously.)

SS Leviathan (1913-1946) was originally named the *Vaterland*, a 5,250 person German ocean liner. She was 950 feetlong and displaced 59,956 gross registered tons. During World War 1, *Leviathan* sported eight 6" guns, two 1-pounders and two machine guns for defense. Uncle Emil served on her from 1923 to 1926. It was a beautiful and huge ship. In the late 1970s my father became friends with Mr. Frank Braynard (1916-2007), nautical historian and author of a large, four-volume history of *Leviathan*. My father became a patron of this historical work and owned all four volumes when completed. I still own one of them, the volume which documents my uncle's service there.

USS Yorktown (CV-10) was the second World War II aircraft carrier of that name.
Its predecessor was sunk after the Battle of Midway and I visited this version in Charleston (S.C.) harbor in 1982 with Bob and Karen Gordon. This is the only fleet carrier I have ever actually visited. It was an inspiring and interesting visit, walking on the flight deck, exploring lower decks and imagining its crew at work during the Second World War. She displaced 36,380 tons loaded and was 872 feet long.

I grew up hearing and reading about the battle of Hampton Roads between **CSS Virginia** (formerly USS Merrimack) and **USS Monitor**, the first naval battle between two "ironclad" naval vessels.

I was mesmerized as a child as to the strange and almost surreal looking shapes of these two new inventions. Monitor and Merrimack would change the face of naval shipping permanently. Merrimack would be sunk in harbor and Monitor lost at sea off Cape Hatteras and its wreck found finally in 1973. She was 275 feet in length and displaced about 4,000 tons. Monitor only displaced 776 tons and had a very shallow draft.



And although it did not make my list, *CSS Hunley* was another unique ship from the same time, generated by the sad occurrence of war- one of the world's first submarines that had any history. Sunken also in Charleston harbor and then raised on August 8th 2,000,

the remains of the sailors entombed, thousands of onlookers present, the Confederate invention saw daylight once again. *Hunley* was preceded actually by *USS Alligator* and *Turtle* (from the Revolutionary period). Each of these were constructed for harbor defense and each saw service in wartime.

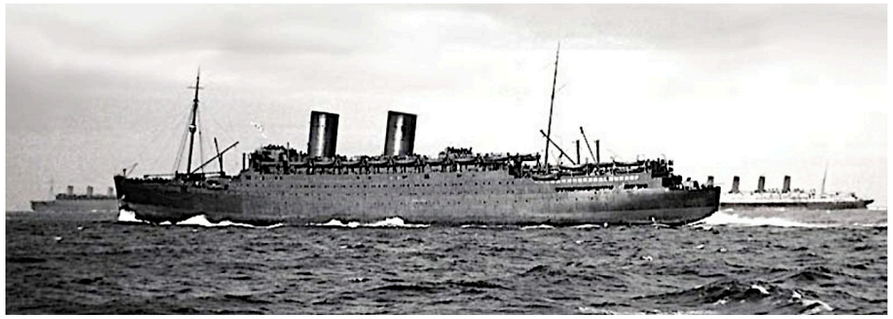
The **USS Constitution** might be the nation's most famous ship. Also known as "Old Ironsides" it was launched in 1979 and remains an active U.S. Navy vessel. A 44-gun frigate at 304 ft. long, 2,200 tons of displacement and it is moored in Boston. Daughter Jocelyn, with her high school marching band, played aboard her in 1997, an honor.

Since my youngest days when my father took me to the 1960 movie in the Arlington Theatre, *Sink the Bismarck*, I have been interested in this impressive German battleship **Bismarck**. She was launched in 1939 and scuttled by the Germans themselves, in the Atlantic, in May 1941. 823 ft. long, equipped with four 15" gun turrets (8 guns) and displacing 50,000 tons fully loaded she was the world's most powerful ship in 1940, sinking Great Britain's most famous battleship, *HMS Hood* in a single engagement. She is one of the largest of my favorite ships but the most short-lived. 2,086 of her crew of 2,200 died with her at sea. Oceanographer Robert Ballard discovered her wreck in 1989 at

15,719 feet down in the North Atlantic. A sister ship, though not technically so, was the German battlecruiser **Scharnhorst**, launched in 1936 and sunk in the North Sea by the Royal Navy on 26 December 1943. Bismarck, pictured with the cruiser *Prinz Eugen*:

Along with her sister ship *Gneisenau*, ***Scharnhorst*** was designated an "ocean raider", aiming at Allied North Atlantic shipping. With a crew of 1,669, was 770 feet long, she displaced 38,700 tons, carried nine 11" guns and was tasked with interrupting North Atlantic Allied convoys when she was prematurely forced to battle in the North Sea before arriving in the Atlantic. My father's troop ship, *RMS Mauretania* (1938-1965), was zig-zagging with its convoy in order to avoid detection by what they feared was *Scharnhorst* on the hunt. They had not yet heard that *Scharnhorst* had been sunk when they left

New York harbor on 7 January 1944. (We must remember that there was no internet, no cell phones and a tight and locked-down at-sea security at the time). In February 1942, Hitler ordered the Brest-based German ships, *Scharnhorst, Gneisenau* and heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* to "dash" home to German ports by making a quick run through the English Channel, which the ships managed to do with only a late discovery, though both of the sister battle cruisers sustained damage by mines. All three ships survived the run, though.



Here she is in troop-ship paint scheme, between Aquitania and Queen Mary

RMS Mauretania, with no guns of course but at almost the same displacement and length of *Scharnhorst,* (and *RMS* standing for Royal Mail Ship) had been a Cunard-White Star Lines passenger liner until the war. She displaced 35,738 tons with a crew of 802 and was 772 ft. long. Dad's 602nd Engineer Camouflage Battalion shipped to Liverpool from New York on board *Mauretania* on a nervous 12-day evasive voyage. She had been launched in 1938 at the Cammell Laird yard in Birkenhead, England and scrapped in 1965 at Thos. W. Ward's shipbreaking yard in Inverkeithing, Fife, Scotland. **Post note:** I do not know what ship my father sailed home from Europe on, in the fall of 1945.

The ***Mayflower*** interests me because we lived near to the replica in the harbor at Plymouth, Massachusetts for so many years and toured on board her a few times.

The original ship's lifespan was from c. 1609 until about 1624. She was a Dutch-style cargo *fluyt,* displacing 180 tons and about 90 feet long. The voyage from Dartmouth, England to Plymouth, Massachusetts (not yet called "Plymouth") took a grueling 10 weeks to cross a stormy North Atlantic in late fall, 1620. (My dad's RMS Mauretania crossing, 323 years later, took 12 days!) **Mayflower** had 102 passengers, including Pilgrims, and a crew of 30—one of whom was the "shallop's mariner", Thomas English (whom we have fantasized to be a distant ancestor of Renée's father, Morley Charles English.) The Mayflower carried 8 small cannons and 4 medium cannons on board, two of which (I think) were placed with the Pilgrim colonists on "fort hill" for defense.

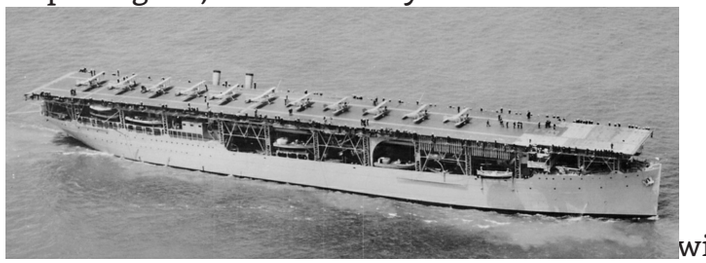
FORTUNE

I include in my list the ships which came to Plimoth (their spelling for their new colony) following *Mayflower.* It was some time, but eventually in the next year the ***Fortune*** (November 1621) and the ***Anne*** (July 1623) arrived, carrying 35 and 93 additional Pilgrims and church members.

ANNE

The *Anne* was a 140-ton ship and the *Fortune* displaced only about 55 tons.

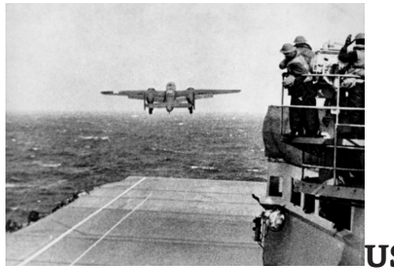
Just because I have always loved aircraft carriers, I include the first one ever, CS-1, **USS Langley**, 1912-42, displacing 14,000 tons fully loaded and 542 feet long and



with a crew of 468 officers and men, carrying 36 aircraft. My late father-in-law--Morley C. English-- was a Navy pilot, flying off CVE or, “escort” carriers at the end of WWII and during the Korean War.

USS Enterprise (CV-6) is famous for its WWII roles, famous for its successor (CV-65), the 1977 space shuttle of that name, and its fictional distant successors, NX-01 (2150-2161), NCC-1701 (2245-2285) succeeded too by NCC-1701 A,B,C,D,E,F &G.

She sailed from 1938 until 1960, was 761 feet long, displaced 25,500 tons when fully loaded, carried 80 to 90 aircraft, held a crew of 2,217 officers and men and was armed to the teeth.



USS Hornet (CV-8) makes my list because of its first-ever launch of B-25s off its deck in a heavily pitching sea. Those planes were headed to Tokyo in early 1942 in the famous Doolittle Raid. She also was a critical contributor to the Battle of Midway in June. Launched only in 1940, sadly, Hornet was sunk 27 October 1942. She was 825 feet long and displaced 25,500 loaded tons and carried 72 aircraft.

USS Enterprise (CV-65)

At 1,123 feet long, displacing 3 ½ times her namesake, 94,781 metric tons, carrying up to 90 aircraft and housing a crew of maximum of 5,828 men and women, CV-65 served from 1961 until 2017. This was a magnificent and beautiful ship. I had a cousin-in-law who flew off her (CDR Rick Parker).

USS Wasp (LHD-1)

Dr. Dean Schmidlin and I visited and toured this impressive ship sometime in the early 2000s in Newport Harbor (Rhode Island). She is a United States Navy multipurpose amphibious assault ship, and the lead ship

of her class. She is the tenth USN vessel to bear the name since 1775, with the last two ships named *Wasp* being aircraft carriers. Launched in 1987, displacing 41,100 tons, crewed by 66 officers and 1,004 enlisted men, 1,687 Marines, carrying Harriers, Lightnings, Cobras, Ospreys, Super Stallions, Venoms and other aircraft as well, plus various types of assault landing craft, Wasp is 843 feet long. She wins the award of being the coolest ship I've ever been aboard!

USS Massachusetts (BB-59) is permanently moored in Fall River, Massachusetts in what is known as "Battle Ship Cove." She was launched in 1941, placed in reserve in 1947 and stricken from the active roster in 1962. At 680 feet long, carrying nine 16" guns in three turrets, with a wartime crew of 2,500 men, displacing 45,233 tons (loaded), she saw combat in a number of WWII campaigns

I visited aboard with my late father-in-law, CDR Morley English in 1984, who had many interesting observations to make about her especially her anti-aircraft capabilities. Mo was a WWII and Korea combat Navy pilot.I include **USS Leyte** (CV-32), an *Essex* class aircraft carrier, launched a month before the end of WWII, at 888 feet long

and displacing 27,000 tons because she is the one fleet carrier my father-in-law flew a TBM Avenger off of. His other ships were CVE escort carriers, His aviator's flight log book records one flight off USS Leyte, 11 February 1951, four years to the day before his daughter Renée would be born at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

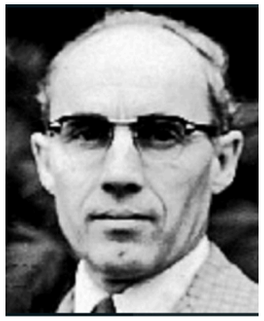
My father-in-law flew TBM Avengers off three CVE's, **USS Sicily** (CVE 118), **USS Rendova** (CVE 114), **USS Badoeng Strait** (CVE 116) escort carriers especially during the Korean War. Just before being scrapped in 1972, *Badoeng Strait* was used in filming the final scenes of the film *Magnum Force* with Clint Eastwood riding a motorcycle on her mothballed flight deck!

USS Badoeng Strait (CVE 116)

TBM Avenger landing on USS Badoeng Strait (CVE 116), by father-in-law Lt M.C. English, Nov. 1951

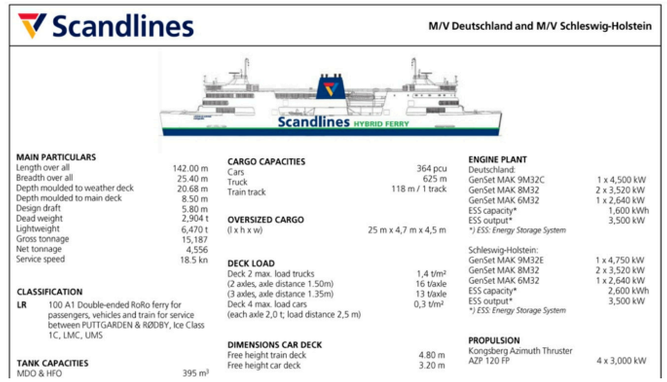
USS Rendova CVE 114

Professor Robert Whitelaw, Mechanical Engineering, Va Tech (1966-87)



NS Savanah was the world's first nuclear powered merchant ship.

I toured her with Bob and Karen Gordon as it was moored at the time in Charleston harbor, in 1982. Her reactor had been designed with power plant project manager and lead nuclear engineer, **Robert Whitelaw** (1917-2008), whom I knew as a mechanical engineering professor at Virginia Tech. He was a good friend and Renée and I traveled with him and his wife, Clara, in 1976. His work on reactors for Babcock and Wilcox was of some fame. At 13,600 tons and 600 ft. long she now lives in Baltimore, MD. I wrote a paper for science class on this ship in about 1965 while in junior high school. Little did I know…


Scandlines

M/V Deutschland and M/V Schleswig-Holstein

Scandlines HYBRID FERRY

MAIN PARTICULARS

Length over all	142.00 m
Breadth over all	25.40 m
Depth moulded to weather deck	20.68 m
Depth moulded to main deck	8.50 m
Design draft	5.80 m
Dead weight	2,904 t
Lightweight	6,470 t
Gross tonnage	15,187
Net tonnage	4,556
Service speed	18.5 kn

CLASSIFICATION

LR 100 A1 Double-ended RoRo ferry for passengers, vehicles and train for service between PUTTGARDEN & RØDBY, Ice Class 1C, LMC, UMS

TANK CAPACITIES

MDO & HFO	395 m³

CARGO CAPACITIES

Cars	364 pcu
Truck	625 m
Train track	118 m / 1 track

OVERSIZED CARGO

(l x h x w)	25 m x 4,7 m x 4,5 m

DECK LOAD

Deck 2 max. load trucks	1,4 t/m²
(2 axles, axle distance 1.50m)	16 t/axle
(3 axles, axle distance 1.35m)	13 t/axle
Deck 4 max. load cars	0,3 t/m²
(each axle 2,0 t; load distance 2,5 m)	

DIMENSIONS CAR DECK

Free height train deck	4.80 m
Free height car deck	3.20 m

ENGINE PLANT

Deutschland:	
GenSet MAK 9M32C	1 x 4,500 kW
GenSet MAK 8M32	2 x 3,520 kW
GenSet MAK 6M32	1 x 2,640 kW
ESS capacity*	1,600 kWh
ESS output*	3,500 kW
**) ESS: Energy Storage System*	
Schleswig-Holstein:	
GenSet MAK 9M32E	1 x 4,750 kW
GenSet MAK 8M32	2 x 3,520 kW
GenSet MAK 6M32	1 x 2,640 kW
ESS capacity*	2,600 kWh
ESS output*	3,500 kW
**) ESS: Energy Storage System*	

PROPULSION

Kongsberg Azimuth Thruster	
AZP 120 FP	4 x 3,000 kW

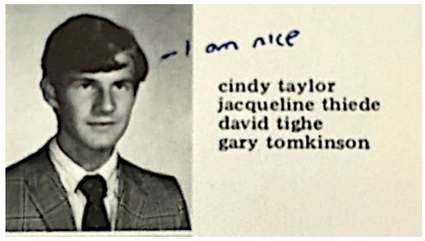
In June of 2013 I had occasion to ride on the **Fehmarn Belt Ferry** from Denmark to Germany via rail. At the time, this ship ferried rail passenger cars and trucks across the Fehmarn Belt part of the sea between Kiel Bay and Mecklenburger Bay. Now, there is a tunnel for rail. This ship made my list because it was on board that I felt some of the deepest fear I have ever felt. As I detrained on board after my train boarded, I climbed up to the passenger lounge and snack bar for the pleasant and peaceful ninety-minute voyage across the Belt. I left my heavy rolling suitcase at my seat in the passenger rail car, as did everyone else. We were required to get off the train for the voyage. However, when we docked in Germany, I took the wrong passenger staircase down to what I thought was the train deck. I emerged on to the truck deck, dodging exiting trucks, getting yelled at in German by a truck warden, and watching my train head off the ship and down the tracks, away, leaving me on board and with my bag still on the

train. The truck warden just shook his head but told me that the train stops only a couple of hundred yards away at the first station. I ran, climbed aboard my train just in time, covered in sweat. I was terrified. To be marooned in Germany, with no suitcase and not speaking the language made me as afraid as I have ever been. The mention of “Schleswig” on the drawing is notable to me—my grandmother was born there in 1870.

The last ship on my list of ships of interest is **MS Eurodam** of the Holland America Cruise Line. At 86,273 tons displacement, 936 feet long, accommodating 2,104 passengers, this ship began service in 2008. Our family cruised on it at Christmas 2013: Myself, Renée, our late step father-in-law Dan Esau, my late mother-in-law Florence English, daughter Jocelyn, grandson Raymond and daughter Susanna. It was a beautiful ship, taking us from Ft. Lauderdale to the Bahamas, Grand Cayman Island, Jamaica and to Key West (including sight of Cuba) before returning to Ft. Lauderdale. It was on this trip, in Key West, that Susanna took Dan parasailing, of which Dan said, “It’s the first time I’ve been in a parachute since 1945” (having served as a paratrooper in the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division in France, Belgium and Germany).

ESSAY SEVEN

It is a fair question to ask why I would include such an essay as follows? Glenn was not a famous person, he was not known by many, and possessing of no unusual traits, property, family acclaim or a sparking personality. His high school picture (below—and from my Annandale High School 1970 yearbook) doesn't even get his name right, listing him as "Gary." But he was my friend when we were young. He was a gentle, transparent person. Glenn went on after our high school years to what is essentially a sad and perhaps even tragic life. But six years before he died (May 20th 2007 at 54 years old), alone, so far as I know, he wrote out his own story—and sent it to me and to a mutual friend from our youth, Jeff Kemp. As of that date his sister Cindy Tomkinson McDowell was living in Yellville, Arkansas and Glenn's son, Barney, in New Orleans.



As such it deserves to be remembered and Glenn is still remembered. Of note, he did father one child, a son, of whom I know nothing. His name was (and presumably is) Barney. Perhaps somehow, at some point Barney will learn of his father's reflection and remembrance of his life.

My Life Story

by the Late Robert Glenn Tomkinson

1952 - 2007

My name is Glenn. I'm an alcoholic. I was born on August 4, 1952, in Indian Town Gap, PA. My parents already had a one-year-old daughter, my sister Cindy. She was born on May 8, 1951. My father was an officer in the U.S. Army and my mother was a volunteer for the Red Cross. My father was a decorated veteran of World War II. He had fought the Germans in battles such as D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge, among others. My earliest memories were of being stationed in Orleans, France, in the middle to late 1950's. We lived in an apartment building near a river. Occasionally, we'd venture into the city to shop in small local shops. I remember most of the streets being dank and dirty. At first I learned a combination of broken French and broken English. Everyone thought I was speaking gibberish. Only my sister could understand me.

When I was about five years old, my father was transferred to Fort Dix, New Jersey. We took an ocean liner to the States. It was called the S.S. United States and was considered the fastest ocean liner in the world. It only took 3 or 4 days to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

At first, we were stationed in a wooden framed barracks on base. Later we moved into a brick house off base. I remember finding an unexploded mortar round buried a few inches deep behind a house under construction, just a block or two down from where we lived. I dug it up and brought it to my father. He reported that I had found it.

I also remember swimming at the Officers' Club pool with my sister and some neighborhood children from across the

street. Also, I remember drinking sodas at the Officers' club bar while watching cartoons on television. I also remember attending a school, but had to drop out because I was having difficulty learning to read. In New Jersey, they taught "sight reading", instead of "phonics", as they do here in Virginia.

Soon my father was transferred to duty in the Pentagon. We relocated in Annandale, Virginia. I had to repeat First Grade and was thereafter a year older than most of my classmates. I remember not taking Elementary School seriously. I was about an average student. I remember we thoroughly enjoyed P.E., particularly kick-ball and laughed and joked around quite a bit.

When I got a little older, I participated in Little League Baseball, Boys' Club Basketball, Cub Scouts, and Boy Scouts up to the rank of Second Class. I also played with neighborhood friends after school and on weekends. During summer vacation, my sister and I went to summer camp.

I slid by in grades one through six, and then went to a different school, Poe Intermediate, for grades seven and eight. I started taking school more seriously and gained aptitude and learned more. I developed good math skills, but overall, I was about a C+ student.

Then I went to Annandale High School for grades nine through twelve. I excelled at mathematics and was an average student overall. However, I had difficulty learning French as a foreign language. The summer after ninth grade I spent the summer session taking Geometry. And the summer session after tenth grade I had to make up a French course. By twelfth grade, I took an Honors Calculus course.

Our high school excelled in varsity football, winning several State Championships in a row and had a long unbeaten record. At one point, Annandale High had the third ranked varsity football team in the nation [1968].

By grades eleven and twelve I decided to go out for j.v. football, j.v. wrestling, varsity debate team, and varsity math team. I had also learned how to play chess rather well and was beating most of my peers at it.

Then things took a turn for the worse. By the summer after eleventh grade, I had begun drinking beer. One summer night a friend of mine and I decided to drive to Reston drinking a case of beer, playing guitar, and singing songs the whole way. Next time, we went to Dulles Airport doing the same thing. Before long, we were going into Georgetown to drink in taverns. I was of age to do so then, because I was just past my eighteenth birthday.

During my twelfth grade year I got by--just barely. I was spaced out the whole school year. I was in a daze. I was lucky to get by that year, but I did. I received my High School Diploma in 1971--three months shy of my 19th birthday.

After applying to several major colleges and universities in Virginia, I was finally accepted by Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg. I choose a person from high school that I knew, but was not real close to, as a roommate. His name was Pete. We got to know each other real well throughout the next few years. After being in Blacksburg about a week, I decided to try marijuana. I soon got addicted to it and developed strong cravings.

I got poor grades and often got stoned instead of attending class. By the middle of the second quarter, I had experimented with LSD. Feeling enlightened, I soon gave up most of my studies to concentrate on my chess game and smoke pot. I didn't drink much beer the first few years in Blacksburg.

After about a year a small group moved out of the dorms and into apartments. Soon, I dropped out of school and went to work as a cook for Hardee's [a fast-food chain]. I enjoyed working and getting high in my free time.

By the spring of 1973, I decided to quit Hardee's and move

to Manassas with a friend of mine, whose name was Richard. I had three jobs while I was in Manassas, each only spanning several months. First, I worked street maintenance for the Street Department of Manassas. Then I got a job on the grounds crew of Vint Hill Station Golf Course [Prince William Golf Course]. Then I got a job as a postal clerk for the U.S. Post Office, commuting to Merrifield. I had a red '67 Volkswagen, but I wrecked it one night on going back home from work.

Soon, I moved back in with my parents in Annandale and got a job at Drug Fair. It occurred to me to go back to Virginia Tech. They gave me a second chance, but put me on academic probation because of my low grade point average (GPA). I went to the second summer session at Tech, in the summer of 1974.

By then I had changed my major from Mathematics to Computer Science to Economics. I did not do well academically in any of those majors. Soon I got a night clean-up job at Hardee's, working after midnight.

By April 1975, I was dismissed from Virginia Tech and had decided to join the U.S. Army. I didn't like the Army and soon realized I had completely entrapped myself. After going through boot camp with a positive attitude, I soon developed passive negativity towards my job. I was in A.I.T. [Advanced Infantry Training] when I decided, after going on leave, to bring back a bag of marijuana with me.

I got caught in a general and multiple barracks search about a week after I got back from being on leave. I was charged with possession of marijuana and due to be court -martialed. I was relieved of duty. I went and obtained an attorney. My lawyer obtained a deal with the prosecutor and I signed a waiver giving me a discharge in lieu of trial. I was soon on a bus back to Annandale from F.t Jackson, South Carolina.

The next day after getting home, I packed up and drove out to Kansas City. There I soon got a job as a bookkeeper working

for April House, Inc., in Lenexa, Kansas. I was happy again. I was living in a house in Desoto, Kansas with sister, Cindy; a pregnant girlfriend of hers; and her boyfriend, Mike. I soon began to drink beer and smoke pot after work.

By the following March, April House was going out of business and they laid me off. I decided to drive back to Annandale. All during this period, I was studying chess and participating in chess clubs.

By April or June of 1976, I landed a job with Travelers Insurance as a policy rater. I tried to show a positive attitude. That August I played in the U.S. Chess Open Championships. I did rather well for a class "C" player, winning four games, losing four games, and drawing four games

In September, Travelers Insurance laid me off and I decided to move to Seattle, Washington. My friend Richard was already there and I got a room in the house where he was living. I got a part time job at a taco stand called Taco Time and a full-time job as a dishwasher for the J&M Restaurant, on 1st and Washington Streets, in Pioneer Square.

I worked for the J&M steady for seven months. All the time I was not cashing and saving up my pay checks. Richard and I had a friend from Manassas who was living and working in the Virgin Islands. Richard and I wrote our friend, Mike, and we decided to visit him on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Richard and I quit our jobs at the J&M Restaurant and boarded a bus for Miami, in March 1977. We went south through Oregon and California and east along to southern border states to Florida. We sight-saw and got high all along the way. It took about nine days to reach Miami where we boarded a flight to St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. and then took a ferry over to St. John.

Mike, Richard, and I drank and got high, swam at the beach, and climbed a mountain, and played pool at a bar for nearly

three weeks. We had a great time. But soon my money ran low and I had to get back to the mainland. I took a flight to Dulles Airport and called my parents when I arrived.

My parents picked me up and I waited in Annandale for my tax refund from the J&M and Travelers Insurance. I soon got back on the bus and headed back to Seattle. Richard arrived in Seattle a few weeks after I did. But soon, our friendship had all but dissolved. He was in a relationship with a girl I didn't particularly like, so we parted company.

This time I couldn't find a job. Soon my money ran short and I found myself out on the streets for the fi r s t time in my life. Not quite streetwise and starting to get hungry, I decided to hitchhike to Montana. This was about August 1977 when I reached Missoula, Montana. There I met some people my age and we partied for about two weeks. Then I decided to take a bus back west to Spokane, WA. and hitchhike to my Uncle RF's orchard in Leavenworth, WA.

I spent about nine days at my uncle's orchard, spending time with my cousin Jim. Then I got my Toyota out of my uncle's barn, where I had left it, before going to the Virgin Islands. I first went to Oregon to get license plates and then headed back to Seattle for a couple weeks and then, all the way back to Virginia. It took me about five days to reach Annandale.

Immediately, I got a job on the grounds crew of a large apartment complex called Heritage Village in Annandale. About three weeks into my job, I wrecked my car, running a stop sign, while going to work. This was about October, 1977. I continued working for Heritage Village until about February. Then, I quit and began drinking heavily.

I continued drinking heavily until I was finally admitted as a patient in Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute, in Fairfax. There I was diagnosed to be afflicted with paranoid schizophrenia. I stayed there for four months in 1978. I was put

on psychological medicine. There I picked up smoking cigarettes and I met an older lady named Joan, whom I came to befriend and love.

After discharge I took outpatient treatment for two more months, during the day. I continued taking medicine and psychotherapy until September, when my parents and I boarded a plane for Texas to visit my Uncle John and his family. We stayed for a week or so in Denton, Texas, and then we flew to Kansas City to visit my sister, Cindy, and her husband Mike. We stayed there about a week and flew back to Virginia.

As soon as I got back, I got a job in the Annandale Jack-in-the-Box as a cook. While I was working there, Joan from the hospital had called my parents' house and wanted to get in touch with me. Around November 4th, 1978, I went over to visit Joan at her apartment and spent the night with her for the first time. Soon my fantasies of us running away together began to take shape.

The day after Christmas in 1978, Joan and I boarded the bus for the west coast. By New Year's Eve, we were in Missoula, Montana. We decided to stay there for a while to see if we liked it. We stayed in a hotel for about three weeks then got a one-bedroom apartment on Broad Street. The temperature was sub-freezing and the snow was about four feet high. Soon, our heat failed and we decided to board a bus for Seattle.

In Seattle, we had several hundred dollars between us, but often elected to sleep in missions, shelters, and outdoors. We often ate in soup kitchens and churches. We stayed in Seattle several months. We were often on the move and did whatever it took to survive. Soon I realized Joan was pregnant and by Easter, 1979, we were ready to go back east. I called my dad and I asked him if he would wire us some money to get back to Virginia. He sent some via Western Union and we boarded a bus to Washington, D.C. We arrived about five days later in D.C., about

3 a.m. I called my parents and they picked us up about two hours later.

We were relieved to be home. We were tired to the point of exhaustion. We were malnourished, anemic and absolutely broke. Our clothes were rags and all our illusions shattered. But I will say this, we loved each other and we had faith in God. So, we were able to recover from our ordeal out west to a large degree.

After a week or so, Joan and I went down to my parent's summer house at Lake of the Woods, Virginia. We went by ourselves and spent time walking through the woods and fishing together. Then my parents showed up and brought us back to Annandale.

After two or three weeks of afternoon picnics in Annandale, I got sick and had to be admitted back into NVMHI again, for a couple weeks. This was July, 1979. Soon I was released. Joan and I decided to move to Sterling, Virginia, where she had a house as terms of her recent divorce settlement. The baby was born on August 4, 1979. I called an ambulance and we went to Loudon County Memorial Hospital to deliver the baby.

The next day I walked all the way back to Sterling, while Joan and the baby stayed in the hospital. The baby was a normal healthy baby boy and we decided to name him Barney. About four days later, Joan and Barney showed up at the house and I was overjoyed.

But soon I got sick again and Joan asked me to leave. This was early September and I was at a loss for some place to go. I refused to leave and Joan called the Police. They came and told me to leave so I walked up to the 7-11 store and called my parents. My parents picked me up and the next day I was admitted back into NVMHI. I again stayed about two weeks and decided to move to Fredericksburg, Virginia.

I got a room at the General Washington Inn on Princess

Anne Street. I got a job as a dishwasher at Hot Shoppes. Soon I moved in with a girl I had met whose name was Angela. I thought Angela was cool, but I still felt love for Joan and Barney. Soon Angela went to Florida and I went back in the General Washington Inn. Then, one day, I got a letter from Vocational Rehab. They wanted to send me to school, if I was willing.

I thought it over and decided to take them up on it. I had also gotten in touch with a mental health clinic and got put back on psychological medicine. This helped me get better. About March, 1980, I moved in with my parents at their new house at Lake of the Woods and enrolled at Germanna Community College. I was majoring in Electronics Technology.

I usually got good marks and excelled in Mathematics, Biology, English, and Electronics. I made the Dean's List once and graduated in the spring of 1983 with *cum laude* honors. I now have an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Electrical/ Electronics Technology. I continued to study chess on my own, reading chess books and playing in chess tournaments for that period and for about ten years afterwards.

After I graduated, I went to work for "Dutch" Cash Register in Gaithersburg, Maryland, as a Cash Register Mechanic. Drinking heavily after work every day, I soon ran into debt. One fateful day I had a minor automobile accident, which resulted in the loss of my employment. So I move back home once again. I reenrolled at Germanna, this time in Data Processing and took a full-time job as a Houseman at the Sheraton Hotel, in Fredericksburg. I received straight "A"'s the spring of 1984 and then dropped out.

I took a job as dishwasher at P.K.'s Restaurant, in Fredericksburg to pay for my gas, beer, and cigarettes. This lasted several months and I got in touch with the Department of Rehabilitative Services (Formerly Vocational Rehab) to see if they would send me to a rehabilitative/trade school. They sent

me to Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitative Institute, in Fishersville, VA to relearn electronics and become a T.V.- radio repairman. I broke my left ankle in April, 1987 and required surgery. I had to drop out of Woodrow Wilson without my certificate.

After my leg healed, I went back to P.K.'s for several months and then got a temporary job with the Washington Inventory Service. I worked long hours for several months until my job ended in March of 1988. I then moved to Culpeper, Virginia and got a job as a bagboy for Food Lion.

I soon found myself unable to make ends meet, fell into deep depression, and attempted suicide. I tried to overdose on psychological medicine, but this attempt failed and I awoke and called an ambulance. I was taken to the Emergency Rom of Culpeper Memorial Hospital, Where I was induced to throw up. I was then taken up to a ward called Pinebrook to recover. While there I obtained the assistance of a Social Worker who helped me fill out an application for Social Security Disability Insurance. I waited without working and living off of General Relief for about seven months until my disability came through in late October, 1988. During that period and afterwards, I had been taking psychological medicine, taking psychotherapy seeing a psychiatrist, and going to the clients' clubhouse.

On July 3, 1992, I received my first D.U.I. It resulted in the suspension of my Virginia Driver's License. In April of 1993, I was convicted of failure to comply with ASAP and sentenced to a drug/alcohol treatment program in Snowden at Fredericksburg. After completing this, I subsequently relocated in Fredericksburg, where I have been for the past eight years.

On September 29, 2000, I was arrested for possession of marijuana. I had my arraignment on October 10, 2000 and my trial on November 28, 2000. I pleaded guilty in General District Court and received no jail time; however, I was sentenced to perform 100-hrs. community service, court ordered detox

program, and 28-daydrug/alcohol treatment program, and six months of community-based probation.

I am 48 years old now and I am grateful to be alive. I did what I had to do to survive.

[the following are poems written by Glenn and included at the end of his essay]:

A LONG HARD WAY TO DESTINY
By Robert G. Tomkinson

Loving life I ventured forth
To a land of Wonder and Amazement
I was ripe with new ideas
And struggled the whole way
Inspired by a brave new world
I took fate by the hand
And I lived to see great wonders
Plagued by lack of opportunity
I made the best of the rest
I lived and loved and fought and gave
With a lust for life I took to the grave
And came to know God in the last days

ON HORSEBACK
By Robert G. Tomkinson

On the horizon
Enamored in Magnificence
A Majestic Princess
On Horseback
Gazes at me
Be still
You have already
Taken a Stand

FALL DAY FISHING
By Robert G. Tomkinson

A puff of magic in the Air
Azure Sky and Cool Breeze
Fishing a stream without a care
Sun on my back with you near
These are the days, These are the days
A kind remark, hand brushes hand
I turn and you are there
The line tugs, A trout jumps
Set the hook with a pull on the pole
Reel it in, the fight is on
Dinner for two, Steam and Trout
The sun goes down
We reminisced the days gone by

Business One-Oh-One
By Robert G. Tomkinson

Will I be as good as you?
Or drift about on the Sea.
Not knowing Whereof or Why I came.
Not know how to use my Brain

Or shall I reason, Cold and Ridged?
Unfeeling, uncaring, and Unabridged.
Trust my judgment, Going on What?
Lies and Deceit at first Believed.

Now the Pain, Agonizes my Soul.
No Love Returned, but Bought and Sold.
Now the Time has come to See the Truth.
My Wires crossed; I have no Place.
By Grace of God, Be Redeemed!!!
You have spoken from hell's dream.
Trust your heart and feel your way.

Soon know Love in a coming Day
And Rejoice for at last you are Free.
There's no value in Revenge, But be Redeemed.
Think of a Deal, and See it Square.
It's up to you to call it Fair.
What you're getting has strings attached.

But for the Ends you have a match.
Free yourself, fair is fair.
Virtue and Kindness are there somewhere.
Trust or lack of it, is what we share.

Associate with people who know how to care.
Mutual interests are what they share.
And mutual goals reframe a pair.

YESTERDAY'S BLUES
By Robert G. Tomkinson

My life is getting easier all the time.
I sing my love, drink my wine.
And if I can see you again,
The walk of life is true to time.
For I love you. You are the only one.
Be true to me and you will see
You are a friend of mine.

Come be my friend and Drink the Drink.
That sets us free (instrumental).

And know that I will plant the seed.
With Grace it will grow to be a tree.
With fruit of Life. For our need.
And be my friend. Be true to me.
And you will see. All our dreams fulfilled.

ATLAS' INCUBUS

By Robert G. Tomkinson

As mighty Atlas supports the Heavens above
A horrible incubus begins to unfold
To Atlas this is all his fate
As he breathes from hell's gate

His knees tremble from Heaven's weight
His arms and chest begin to quake
Then a piercing cry wakes up the dead
And a tear trickles down might Atlas' cheek.

Blood flows down Atlas' furrowed brow
Then Heaven crumbles and crashes down
Atlas falls upon the ground dead

All is mirky on this fateful day
When Atlas' strength failed
Against Heaven's weight

POWER GLIDER
By Robert G. Tomkinson

Riding on a power glide
My mind in touch with everything
I see the earth below
And marvel at its majesty

Gliding through the clouds
My wings bestowed with grace
Sun and wind all around
My beating heart quickens its pace

Now begin a slow descent
The ground five hundred feet below
A cushion of wind to ease me down
I feel euphoria with this all

Ten seconds to touchdown
My palms and forehead already moist
A view so glorious and grand
I take one deep breath and land

OLYMPIC BOBSLEDDING
By Robert G. Tomkinson

Gliding down the slippery slope
We artfully steer the curves
We shift and dodge all the bumps
On our journey of descent
Ever faster we go
Maneuvering down the hill
Staying in the groove
And hoping all is well
The finish line just ahead
Careful to avoid a spill
Timed descent is the game
We race with speed and skill
Tobogganing to a stop
We have won the gold
Our beating pulses begin to ease
A tale to tell when we are old

ADVENTURE
By Robert G. Tomkinson

Going on a marvelous journey
Through time and space
Over hill and dale
A capricious escapade
With joy and wonder
Seeing the truth
Knowing the way
With a love so dear
Riding high once again
Now I wonder
What is next
Will I be king
Or be the naive
Will I be the fool
Or know the truth
Only time will tell

GRACE UNDER FIRE
By Robert G. Tomkinson

My dreams have flowed
Within, Without
I can't believe you would have
Done it the way I did
But, I am a soul
Yearning to be free
Wanting to be loved
Proud, but Humble
Giving and Caring
Proud to have Survived
I am a SURVIVOR!!!

Ode to Barney, Gentleman and Scholar
By Robert G. Tomkinson

My mind ENLIGHTENED with JOY
My senses refreshened with Pleasure
I KNOW my Heart is Overjoyed
At your EMINENCE'S friendship
Your stature is Admirable
Your mind Acute
Your style impeccable
And your wit astute
For your Wit and Charm are extraordinary
You are a Fashionable Prince

I PROMISED YOU FRUIT
By Robert G. Tomkinson

I promised you fruit
Fruit for fruitcake at Christmas time
Fruit for your cerial at breakfast time
Fruit of the vine to make wine

Eat a Peach
An Apple a day keeps the doctor away
Eat, drink, and enjoy the fruit of your labor
Yes, we have some bananas
Be fruitful and multiply

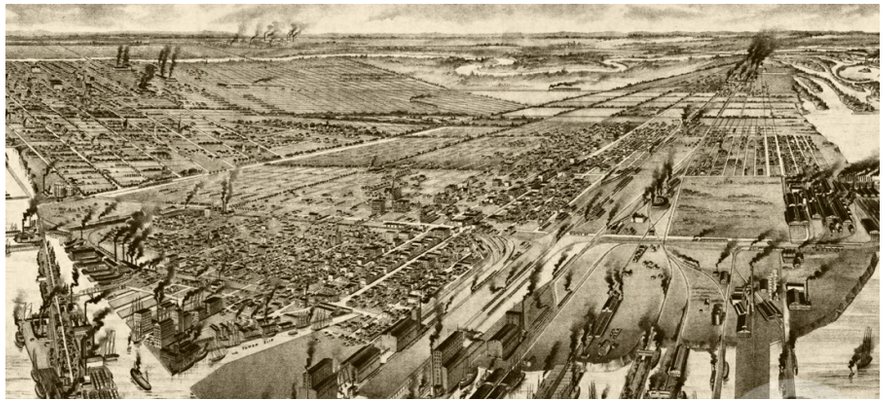
Bottle of wine, Fruit of the vine
Oh won't you let me start over?

Essay Eight

Chris and Metha

A family story of His Grandparents

By Neil Christian Damgaard 2021



The summer of 1896 was unusually warm for northern Wisconsin. Chris was 26 and his "bride", Metha, in that summer, was also 26 (he still called her his *brud*.) They lived in a small, rented farmhouse in South Superior, having come to the USA from Denmark five years earlier. Metha was six months pregnant with their first daughter (although, of course, they did not know the child's gender until birth). Seven more children would eventually follow, four more daughters and three sons. Chris worked hard in civil construction, when there was work, and Metha's extraordinary cooking skills served them both well. She had worked for some time before coming to the U.S. as a celebrated cook in Hamburg. Chris was a proud member of the new Danish Lodge (*Danevirke Loge No. 89)*, founded in Superior

just the year before. Superior was amazingly diverse for a city of just 31,000 residents (at least from a European standpoint), with immigrants from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, England, Ireland, Scotland, Poland, Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary and Croatia.

"Vil du venligst forberede dine vidunderlige limpar, Metha?" ("Would you please prepare your wonderful dumplings, Metha?") Chris would often plead. She would reply, "måske, hvis du opfører dig selv" ("Perhaps, if you behave yourself.") Each spoke some English, and they were improving as the years passed, but in their home they deferred to their native tongue. Each spoke some German as well.

They had both emigrated from Haderslev, North Slesvig, southern Denmark, which had a history of going back and forth between Danish government and annexation by Germany. Chris had left Denmark to avoid being impressed into the Prussian army. He came through Ellis Island in New York City. Metha Hansen had soon followed her fiancé but entered the US through Canada. They were married in the Danish Lutheran church in Superior (itself recently dedicated on July 5th, 1891—the Damgaards were among the

first tying nuptial knots there) and there they each spent the rest of life, never returning to Denmark—several siblings followed them eventually. The Damgaards lived in the Tampa, Florida area for eighteen months also, in 1926 and '27 when Chris found much work during the Florida land boom. Chris and Metha, son Harry and son Martin moved there for what would be the most idyllic period of Martin's life. But that was still three decades into the future. (Martin would return for the last four years of his life, in 1990--a century after his parents came to America).

Christian Sorensen Damgaard was born on December 9th, 1869, and Metha Kirstine Hansen on January 16th, 1870. They were Danes. Christian (who was known to many as "Chris" and to a few as "Christ", short "i"--he often referred to himself as such) was eldest child of nine children. His father was Jens Sorensen Damgaard and he farmed the rich green fields of southern Dansk —bee-keeping included! He said to Chris at the train, "Min søn, jeg tror ikke, at vi skal ses igen" ("My son, I do not think that we shall see each other again") and he put into Chris' hand a small wooden handled family seal—there was only the one--with the letters "J.S. Damgaard" under a farm scene, including a beehive.

(Chris and Metha would name their last child with the middle name of Jens, and his, Martin Jens', granddaughter Jocelyn, would give her son Jens as a middle name many years later, in 2012).

"Du skal respektere mig, Metha. Jeg er at år aeldre end dig," he would joke—although they were born only 38 days apart… ("You must respect me, Metha. I am a year older than you.")
"Så du siger Chris, men min bedstemor var en prinsesse," ("So you say, Chris, but my grandmother was a princess,") Metha would fire back.

By 1896 Superior was growing steadily. The huge grain elevators with grain from all over the Midwest and shipped off down the Great Lakes through the twin ports of Duluth and Superior, the iron ore docks doing the same with taconite pellets from northern Minnesota, and the new Great Northern Railway were all constantly busy. Chris loved to ride his bicycle around Duluth, when he was not working. One day, from the highest point in Duluth (now called Enger Point) he began the downhill ride. But he lost control of his bicycle, going too fast and he crashed forward into the gravel. He still had gravel in his knee when he died, 45 years later.

The Harbor, seen from Enger Point lighthouse (in Duluth)

As he recovered in his bed in their little house, Metha swabbed the wounds with warm cloths and what simple medications she could find after his friends brought him home in a wagon. They laid him in their bed, paid their respects and offered any help Metha might need. She wondered secretly if her unborn child could hear the trauma outside and she prayed, also secretly, that God would spare her young husband. He did not appear to have any broken bones, a miracle in itself, and his friends reported as such. But he was torn up, with lacerations and wounds all over.

"Du er et fjols min mand" ("You are a fool, my husband"), she quietly said to him, with rare tears—not so much scolding as heartbroken.
"Åh men det var vidunderligt at flyve så hurtigt," he croaked out, ("Ah but it was wonderful to fly so fast"). And then he drifted off to sleep from the dose of dilaudid she gave him, with a small slice of *kringle* that she had made just that morning. Her mother, also Kirstine, had told her, "tag aldrig medicin på tom mave" ("never take medicine on an empty stomach".)

Metha would deliver two children, one still-born and one who

lived only a single year, to Chris, in their home—as most everybody in Superior was. She also bore eight other children. She inherited a kind-of permanent sadness from those two losses and with this pregnancy—her first--she was nervous, of course. But on November 8th 1896, a healthy baby girl arrived who they named Jennie Helene. Chris held his newborn daughter and thought there could be no finer joy. “Min Jennie jeg ved du vil blive specie log gøre noget vidunderligt“ (“My Jennie, I know you will become special and do something wonderful”.) Metha said, “Du er en høj mand, Chris” (“You are a tall man, Chris”) and wondered if their daughter would grow tall like him, or be short like her.

Metha’s second child, Edith Kirstine was born in 1897 but died in 1898. It would be another three years, but on November 14th, 1899, a son arrived to greet sister Jennie into the small South Superior home—healthy also. Chris and Metha named him Emil Christopher. But soon tragedy occurred as a fire burned down their little farmhouse. Jennie Helene would remember the night for the rest of her life. The little Damgaard family then moved closer into town, to a small, yellow house (where her last child was born) and then to a new little two-story bungalow, on Banks Avenue, 1926 Banks—just over from the main north-south avenue of Superior-- Tower Avenue. There, Jennie Helene, Emil Christopher, Ethel Martine, Harry Christian, Frida Dagmar, Edith Valborg, Marvel Christine and finally Martin Jens would grow together, endure the impossibly harsh winters, all be confirmed in the Danish Lutheran faith and explore their futures under the watchful eyes of Chris and Metha.

Jennie Helene and Frida would become nurses and marry their loves, Frida living out most of her life in Wisconsin after serving as an Army nurse, and Jennie Helene nursing Great War army veterans back to health, and living most of her life and raising a large family in Miami. Harry and Marvel would marry and move to Seattle. Emil and Martin would work for the Great Northern and then Emil left in a huff in 1920 or so, and was never again seen by his family. Edith stayed single, remained on Banks Avenue and would spend her life alongside Metha, taking the city bus to work in Duluth, and eventually earn her bachelor’s degree in medical laboratory science. She and her younger brother Martin were the only Superior Damgaards to attend college. Here is Metha and her youngest son, Martin in about 1926 in Florida:

Chris died in 1941 of heart failure, just before Martin joined the U.S. Army—war was looming. (Is not Martin's story told elsewhere?)

Metha lived until 1960, and died peacefully in the Banks Avenue home, just after her 90th birthday. Her last barely audible words to daughter Edith, the only one with her, were, "Min Edith, jeg elsker dig og vi skal ses igen himlen med vor Frelser, Jesus,"--"My Edith, I love you and we shall see each other in heaven with our Savior, Jesus." Edith knelt close to her mother's ear and whispered, "Ja, Mor, vi skal virkelig vaere sammen med Ham", "Yes, Mama, we shall indeed be with Him."

She died holding Edith's hand in the peace of the Lord. Metha was buried next to her husband and three children—the first

and second Ediths and the first Martin--in Superior. But they are not forgotten.

Duluth in 1924, from the old Damgaard photo album

ESSAY NINE

The funniest stuff I ever saw

Neil Damgaard 24 Oct 2023

Funny is important. It has always been important to me. In fact, I think that if a person can't laugh, especially at himself, he needs to blow his brains out. Well, maybe that's a bit extreme…

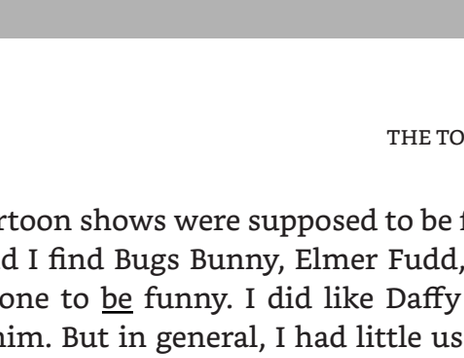
Funny is important. That's it. That's what I'm saying.

I can't imagine where our sense of "funny" comes from. Did God invent it? Did God build into us a funny-gland that like say, the thyroid, is there and you don't know it unless it malfunctions? I don't know. But I think the "funny" is fundamental to being human. Even British people think some things are funny. Granted, they're not Americans. They don't think slap-happy is funny. Except Benny Hill, their funny-idiot. I thought he was stupid.

My first exposure to funny was as a kid when I would watch late-night TV talk-shows and people like Jack Parr would interview some famous funny person. I usually didn't get the humor but I learned to laugh anyway because the laugh-track prompted it. Then there were sit-coms of the early 1960s that were funny, or supposed to be anyway: *Dick Van Dyke, McHale's Navy, the Beverly Hillbillies, Hogan's Heroes, Donna Reed, Jackie Gleason, Andy Griffith* (which had occasional and poignant moments of serious messaging, which I usually found to be good juxtapositions), *Gilligan's Island* and *Get Smart*.

I guess kid's cartoon shows were supposed to be funny and only occasionally did I find Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Mickey Mouse or Fred Flintstone to be funny. I did like Daffy Duck—I could identify with him. But in general, I had little use for what was *supposed* to make me laugh as a kid. I seemed to be thinking secretly, "let's get on to the good stuff, the grown up-aimed funny stuff." And then in high school I accidentally discovered the Marx Brothers from the 1930s and 40s.

Earlier, I had watched another humor-show of their era: the Three Stooges. I grew up with Moe, Larry and Curly. I judged Shemp to be a just-mediocre replacement for Curly although he was actually Moe's and Curly's real brother). And I suppose I maybe saw Groucho Marx on "You Bet Your Life" in the 50s sometime but I don't remember thinking he was particularly funny-just a snarky old man. Never mind Groucho had been in entertainment at that point for fifty years! I didn't think him funny.



But in high school Rick LeCompte took me and two others to the Biograph Theatre in Georgetown for an all-day Mark Brothers "fest." I was changed. I thought, "where has this been all my life?" Horsefeathers. *Duck Soup. A Day at the Races* and *A Night at the Opera*. Four Marx Brothers movies in a row. I came out of the theater stoned! This stuff was brilliant. I had stumbled into a new narcotic. We quoted those movies for months afterwards through our senior year (abd I find myself still quoting from

them). At graduation in Constitution Hall, it was either Rick LeCompte or Bob Daugherty (I can't remember which one), marching across the stage to receive his diploma, went into the Groucho crouching-walk with the cigar-flicking gesture, and I thought I would die from laughter. (The principal, an old Navy man, didn't think it was keeping with the gravity of either the place or the moment). It was in high school, too, that I discovered The Firesign Theater and loved their form of satire. "Firesign" was tailor-fit to my personality.

Also, in high school my best friend, Jeff, and I explored some pretty strange and *avant-garde* humor, recording original songs on tape, us playing guitars and making up impromptu lyrics. We drew cartoons and shared them and added to each other's stories. It was pretty weird. But it was wonderfully created and most importantly supremely funny. "Funny" became a new appendage. It became part of my psyche. My parents, though pretty somber lots of the time, each possessed a sense of humor. My mother especially in relaxed moments, would explore funny stuff randomly. She loved to play with words. She liked to say "al-u-mín-ium." And she came up with a weird Germanesque expression, preceded by "that don't make no" and then she would say "Mox Nix Aus," and laugh very hard. I never did learn what that meant. But she could be really funny. In about 1963 I was in the 6th grade. I had carefully set up, with toy soldiers, a large Civil War battle, on my bedroom floor. Cannons, attacking soldiers, flags, fortifications, cheveaux de frise, etc. When I came home from school that afternoon, and went to my room to resume my play battle, I found the soldiers had been rearranged, reversed in victory configuration to favor the Union, and a Union flag-bearer had a little banner pinned to his flag which said, "Surrender or be kilt." She would never admit to making this historical modification but always just slyly smiled if I mentioned it again. Ha Ha. And when she would get together with her sisters Mary, Betty and Joyce, and brother Neil (after whom I was named) they would yuck it up endlessly. The

other siblings, Mom was six-of-nine, and her parents were pretty severe.

One guy (Joe Cummings) signed by senior year book as "to Neil. The most cynical guy in our class. Except for possibly Bob Daugherty (see above)." I wore that badge proudly!

My Dad liked to tell stories of the Army which were funny. Not much else. Except occasionally he would go into what I called "acting mode" when he would don some dumb costume or mask and act out some short skit or sketch. He often did this at Christmas. He delighted to tell the story of a major Army engineering conference in about 1960 which he attended in Chilliwack, British Columbia featuring army engineers from the U.S., Great Britain, Canada and Australia, where at night (after supper, and not a few libations) they would turn the couches over into a tunnel, divide up into two teams and with each team entered the "tunnel" from opposite ends, see who would emerge first on the other side. He always told this tale with great laughter—the last time at his retirement luncheon in 1973.

In college somehow, I was given the nickname "Funny man." That's ironic now as I seem to be known as a pretty grumpy, severe and humorless person who only rarely smiles. But then, I blurted out humor like a firehose. That was back when nothing mattered. I didn't have a reputation, a respected position in the community, a responsibility to maintain dignity and authority. And I wasn't being paid a salary to be serious. Back then you went to class (maybe), studied (maybe) and made your friends laugh! Seven days a week!

I could never "tell jokes" in the traditional sense. But I could BE funny. Lots of the time. Girls especially thought I was funny, or at least they pretended to. A few guys would chuckle but mainly they just thought I was crazy. In the university dining hall one night we found little gelatinous creatures in the chocolate milk. We dubbed them "jelly-blobbers." The girls screeched and

laughed. The guys just went, "Ewww—get that glass away from me, man."

In 1972 I came to faith. Lots changed but I did not lose my sense of humor. Nor my capacity for the sardonic. Coming to faith injected me with a new sense of propriety, or at least it was supposed to. Don't get me wrong. My humor learned some restraint. Poking fun at other people became a thing I would learn to control. Jesus told us to treat each other the way we want to be treated. OK. I get that. I don't enjoy *being* belittled, cast as a stooge or made fun of for personal quirks, of which I have no few of. (I know. We're not supposed to end a sentence with a preposition. Get over yourself).

I became a Youth Pastor in 1977 in the first church in which I trained as a young minister. I quickly developed the awareness that teenagers are a bottomless well of humor. They're crazy. They're random. They're undisciplined and ill-mannered. They're unrestrained all too often. They're creative. They're appreciative more quickly of what is funny in the modern culture. My wife observed, "Neil, you're getting a second chance at childhood." Too true! I loved them and subconsciously discovered a great reservoir or funny material. Here was a well-stocked ammo dump of funny stuff. Humor became, without any effort, a main strategy of ministry. I still laugh at some things we did. We did skits. We fired off bottle rockets AT each other. We did funny things with fire. We dressed up and played funny roles. Sometimes we mercilessly made fun of each other and the crustier adults in the church (never in their presence!)

Most memorable was a Concert Night we put on in November 1978. There were serious and wonderful musical performances —one in particular, was a deeply moving piano solo written by the late Chuck Robbins for the Lord's Table, he shared. (It remains posted on the *Grace in the Valley* Internet Archive website.) A Bible devotional was given. But the best stuff were the skits the kids put on, some of which were take-offs of

Saturday Night Live sketches. The evening went into the night and as far as I was concerned it could go on *all through* the night. It was an amazingly creative affair!

I fear that spiritual people in the Church think that it is carnal to laugh too much. I have taken to referring to such a fraternity as "the evangelical industrial complex" which generally earns me a frown. I think we've lost the sense of the spontaneously funny or maybe we just go into, as a knee-jerk-reaction, a mode of clamping down on humor before it gets out of hand. For a while there were Christian comedy teams that were making a play for attention. The one of these that amused me was a group called *Isaac Air Freight*, out of Calvary Chapel (founded by the late Chuck Smith). But generally, anything officially funny and coming out of California was generally frowned upon by my evangelical community. Too bad. I think that sometimes we take ourselves too seriously.

For many years, in the church which I "pastored", we had two Sunday morning services. In between the two services we had Sunday School. I taught the senior high students, until they became college students and then we all transitioned to "the college class." I called it *The Hip Class,* then *The Millennials,* and finally just the *X-Y Class.* While teaching Bible and theology, fostering friendships between young Christians and addressing many cultural challenges, I had fun in those classes, between the two serious worship services. But I felt like the Lord was pleased. Even if some of our more serious-minded adults walked by my class and raised an eyebrow or two.

I hope my daughters remember the many jokes and funny-traditions we employed in our family when they were growing up. They are the most wonderful women I know now, but if somehow, I unconsciously programmed them, because our theology was so serious and case-hardened, to stifle humor and fun, I must permanently apologize for that miscall. I am glad we can still laugh together occasionally now.

I can state this with confidence: we all enjoyed much humor at the expense of our family animals: dogs, cats, rats and one bird. The cats were especially susceptible to our humor-poking fun. One of our many, well, he was "ours" in the sense that he ate at our back door, was named Macavity, whom we named after the T.S. Eliot cat of same name in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats,* immortalized in the film *Logan's Run.* When we found Macavity's outdoors buddy, Jack (a tabby) frozen and dead one early winter morning in the driveway—sad enough—he had a marked smile on his face. Apparently, he had lapped up some radiator coolant from a leak under my car's engine. He died a happy death. I remember that smile to this day!

When I was at Dallas Seminary it was an especially serious and spiritual crowd. Generally. I found that off campus though, some of us loved to laugh. A group of us took to shooting pool at "Mickey Finns" after class. Often. And I found a few fellow students who, at least occasionally, could manage to NOT take themselves too seriously—although ALL of us took what we were doing very seriously—an expression which I got from fellow DTS student Frank Carmical who said, "I take what I'm doing very seriously but I try to never take myself too seriously." There's wisdom in that. And we could loosen up at appropriate moments. And our wives, I think, had to do this to survive us! One esteemed professor owned a special and unique sense of humor and this would come out during lectures when you least expected it. I often thought, "Dr. John Hannah is just a little bit nuts." His humor kept him going, I felt, and as I say double-doctorate Dr. Hannah was (and is) held in the highest academic and spiritual regard. But he modeled something which I appreciated—humor! Dr. Howard Hendricks was also very funny and often, especially when he mimicked US!

Under stress or in important places, funny is still important. In graduate school, I was taping a lecture with small cassette recorder, by a DTS professor that I loved (I never skipped a single

one of his classes and I taped every lecture in one class for my wife to hear later—she loved them too). After class one day, I went to the front of the lecture hall to unplug my recorder. As I reached down to the floor to unplug the device, the professor backed into me and fell on to my back. As he flailed about to get up and could not, me holding him up (and he was a big guy), I could not get out from underneath him. Other students watched this vaudevillian act and the laughter roared! The professor and I both laughed too (once we got up off the floor) and each took a bow! You've got to be able to laugh at yourself.

On a recent Dallas Seminary podcast (called "The Table", September 26, 2023) hosted by Kasey Olander (Web Content Specialist for the Hendricks Center), Dr. Steve Wilkens (Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Azusa Pacific University) and Dr. Robert Duckworth (Director of Counseling Services and Professor of Counseling at DTS) were interviewed about the subject of humor. They each identified the topic as important to them and more, a biblically identifiable characteristic of healthy and prospering humanity. Although the subject is only rarely addressed among evangelical Christians in any kind of intentional way. Dr. Duckworth suggests that humor is a natural part of being human and is naturally soothing and healing for us. Each of these sees lots of humor in biblical stories: Esther (Haman), Jonah (his reaction to the call to Nineveh and God's response), First Samuel, the guys on the road to Emmaus, and many others.

Christian marketing always cracks me up and I find humor in the absurdities of it so often. How can we, armed with the Gospel, stoop to mere profit-taking? How funny!

For a season in the late 1990s I joined with my daughters and their friends in following and loving a comedy website and animated creation called "Home Star Runner." It was complete absurdity but hit us all with a hilarity we enjoyed greatly. Some of that still makes me laugh!

There have been a number of well-known comedians that I have found very funny over the years. Steve Martin was a master of comedy of an absurd and professional dimension. Unfortunately, he became tired of his many years of comedy and dropped it entirely. There was the *Not Ready for Prime Time Players* of Saturday Night Live in the late 1970s and with whom Martin teamed up a number of times. A few 1970s and 80s sit-coms struck me as worthy: Welcome *Back Kotter*, *Barney Miller*, *M*A*S*H* and *WKRP*.

Later, Jerry Seinfeld—and continuing in new iterations today even—has a particular wit that I find constantly funny. His recent diatribe about growing up in New York in the 1960s is side-splitting to me. Seinfeld also surrounded himself with a cast where each was very funny too. And lately I have enjoyed Conan Obrien's humor. The *Conan Obrien Needs a Friend* podcast is fresh, random, common-man like, but also pretty carnal. Often. I can only take so much. But at the same time, for some reason, some of the more earthy humor does not offend me. I am concerned about this. I ***should*** be offended at absolutely anything that is off-color. I should never find something that is in any way derisive or relating to a baser experience in life as funny. Never. Absolutely never. OK. I get it. But here I am, still laughing at Seinfeld and Conan. They're not Richard Pryor or Eddie Murphy who capitalized on finding humor in the grossest of topics. But still Seinfeld and Obrien can get edgy. What is it about edginess that finds us laughing? What is it about being human that goes there? Wilkens identifies "benign violation" as a barrier that allows some small aggressiveness in a joke but it does not go over the boundary. The challenge is that the boundary moves depending on "what room" one is in….

Another source of humor for me has been how we speak? Regional accents are fun. Street-slang can be hilarious, but here I need to be careful. Foreign language imitations crack me up although the ice gets thin there, I know. (Particularly, my

daughters tell me, when I go into my German/Russian/Soviet character—"not funny Daddy. Stop that.") Recently I have been having fun with the huge download of "buzzwords" which have seeped into our daily lifestyles. We're talking in buzzwords and not even being aware of it! "Well, just FYI, I'm circling around to gather some low-hanging fruit for the bottom line…" What? Very funny.

This article is seeking to identify funny stuff that I have noticed. I don't want to think about what I do NOT think is funny. This article does NOT identify (specifically at least, or at length) the great host of modern sources of humor that I do not find humorous--or I would be writing for a long time and making a really long list! But briefly (to use a buzzword, in offer to offer a more "well rounded" article), I do not find funny:

- Sexual and bodily functions or making fun in jokes of people's physical appearance -
  - Rarely-indulged exception to this *verboten* category for me are those occasions when I cross paths with people who appear so out-of-control weird in their deliberate appearance, that I cannot help by laugh at their ridiculousness. Probably though, even then, I would not publicly do so to their humiliation or hurt. But it is hard NOT to notice some folks for their costumery, make-up, hair styles, skin ink or clothing when they clearly are seeking attention by them.
- Racially focused humor
- Violence or tales of the macabre. The spirit world is real. It should not be trifled with.
- World War Two (with the very occasional exception granted for *Hogan's Heroes*, although it is clear to me that that show could not and would not be made today)

- Any attempt at humor which focuses on biblical people, events or doctrine. Unless the event quoted IS definitely funny, which I find to be rare. The humor in 1st Kings 18:27, however, is unmistakable!
- If there is something that I am not confident would be humorous across cultural boundaries (i.e. Wilkens' comment about American jokes not being understood by Russians.)

I think funny stuff keeps us going. I think funny stuff keeps us from taking ourselves too seriously. I think funny stuff lightens the load and clears the air in times of tension, stress and depression. I think the healthy and edifying identification of funny stuff can even be a gift that some people have.

I'm still looking for funny stuff. I still love to laugh. Funny is important! I still love to laugh at people that I think are naturally funny. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of funny stuff!

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ESSAY TEN

The Third Rail of the Third Reich (and Göring's Ash Tray)

by Neil Damgaard and Sam Wilson
September 2023
Eighty Years Hence

THE REICH MARSCHALL OF THE GREATER GERMAN REICH
HERMANN GÖRING ON HIS FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY 12 JANUARY 1943

He stubbed out his last cigarette in an ashtray on a table. For just a passing couple of seconds, when time seemed to stop briefly, the dreariness of the room seemed challenged by the elegance of a small ash tray which seemed out of place. A cream white with gold piping, a pretty green background on the sides and pleasant golden inlaid flowers. Helmuth turned it over, dumping the ashes on the table in a final if pointless gesture of insult and saw the inscription—to Göring. *Eine passende ironie* ("a fitting irony,") he snuffed and lay the ash tray on the table where it then sat, unmoved, for two months. Accompanied by his Chief of Staff Colonel Theodor von Dufving and adjutant Major Siegfried Knappe, who drove, General Helmuth Weidling climbed up the stairs back to the street, hoisted himself into the back of the armored truck when he began his final announcement-circuit. The German Army had surrendered and he would soon be grabbed by the Soviets.

* * * * *

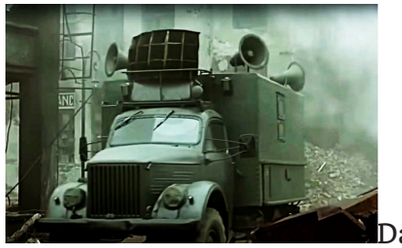
2

Two months later, the air was dank and it was almost completely dark in the bunker. It was completely quiet. A chorus of different smells attacked any visitor's nose: there was still a faint cordite odor, left over even now from all the shelling; the officially corporate smell of old office paper and furniture; a foul smell of rot from things joined to standing water that had seeped in and remained unsumped out; in places the

unmistakable smell of death where German officers had killed themselves and their corpses had lain untouched for days; and there was the odor of urine. The only light was that provided by candles or flashlights - a stark juxtaposition with the halls and rooms that burned so brightly six months earlier. The few soldiers were mostly using candles now to see with as they stumbled through. It was mostly just black within the silent concrete walls—which in places were four feet thick.

Condensation dripped and pools sat from when the Soviets had flooded the place. Except for a couple of *ryadovyye soldaty* (enlisted guards), their soldiers had mostly vacated the facility for the time being, standing aside in deference to a few American and British soldiers now making inspections. As *Life* magazine reporters would shortly describe it, it was creepy down there. The Soviets had a different, a simpler and a darker rage to satisfy. And as an irony--the first to enter the bunker had been Soviet German speaking female nurses and then female traffic wardens who entered through the emergency exit in the Chancellery Garden. They looted most of Eva Braun Hitler's and Magda Goebbels' wardrobes. They would be followed soon enough by various male combatants who just looked for German personnel at first, capturing many of course, made a few glances around at the massive amounts of paper and trash lying about,

snatching valuables as they might find. Now was mainly just flotsam and jetsam—more the former at this point. Any of the real art was long gone now.



Days would pass. It would be June before American, British and French officers would also make their way in through the emergency exit. The bunker complex was now an official assignment for survey and investigation. For others on more clandestine OSS teams, it represented a possible hub for usable intelligence data that might become strategically useful later in what would become "the Cold War" (though no one was using that term yet). For other less important but still official visitors it was a great curiosity with an almost mystical quality. This was the category into which fit the young U.S. Army camouflage engineer Captain Damgaard who also had an "intelligence" tag on his form DD 214 on this July 1945 day. With its entrance portals, steel doors and stairs down into the bunker still under guard, random Berliners were not allowed in. Surrendered German soldiers were definitely *Verboten*. Some Soviet soldiers milled about in the streets above, smoking, lounging, waiting, no longer fighting panzers but now boredom —waiting for well, they were not sure what? Any U.S. Army personnel had to wear and show a special intelligence badge if they wished admittance. And there were no non-Soviet women near; only a few bewildered Berlin women above.

It was now 64 days since General Helmuth Weidling had driven around the streets in an armored truck with loudspeakers attached, announcing to all German soldiers, citizens and to Russians that a cease-fire was now in place and that the German army was surrendering. On April 30th Adolph Hitler and Eva

Braun had killed themselves in the Führer's bunker sitting room, its official designation was *der Führerbunker.* His propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels had also committed suicide by pistol shot or by cyanide—no one is sure, after first executing his wife, Magda. It was the 2nd of May and at that point Weidling signed the surrender order. (The Goebbels had also murdered their six children earlier, ages 4 to 12--Helga, Hildegard, Helmut, Holdine, Hedwig and Heide--Magda saying, "I can't imagine raising them in a world without National Socialism.") According to Traudl Junge, the eldest, Helga, resisted but to no avail.

On April 22nd, as commander of the *LVI Panzer Corps*, General Weidling had by error actually been summoned to the Führerbunker and sentenced to death by Hitler—supposedly for pulling back his lines, which he had not done. However, after clearing the incident, he was appointed to be commander of the Berlin defense area two days later. Now, Weidling had placed under his command the last approximately 45,000 Berlin defenders, consisting of units of various quality and quantity, from a few *Waffen-SS* and *Panzer* divisions to smaller *Volkssturm Hitlerjugend* and flak assistance units. On April 26th, the Bendlerblock--a building complex in the Tiergarten district of Berlin--located on Stauffenberg-straße--an old army headquarters--was chosen as a base of operations for Weidling and his staff. The complex was not far from the Reich Chancellery. (It would later become the site for the German Resistance Memorial—commemorating the execution site of the 20 July 1944 conspiracy-participants). Despite presenting various proposals for a breakout, both breakout and surrender were prohibited by Hitler for the next days, until the dictator finally permitted Weidling to plan a breakout attempt on the night of April 30th, a few hours before his suicide. After receiving news about Hitler's death and visiting the Führerbunker, Weidling assembled his staff in the Bendlerblock and discussed the situation. And on May 2nd after Joseph Goebbels' suicide, Weidling arranged a meeting with Marshal

Vasily Chuikov, commander of the Soviet 8th Guards Army, who demanded complete capitulation of the Berlin garrison. The surrender order was signed by Weidling and announced by loudspeaker to the remaining German troops in Berlin from within his armored truck.

Weidling was taken into custody by the Red Army and transferred to Moscow, where he was intensively interrogated and later sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for war crimes. Helmuth Weidling died from heart failure in the central prison of the city of Vladimir on 17 November 1955 and was buried in an unmarked grave.

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3

There are “three rails” in this story. The first is the rail of evil, a wicked rail of conquest, domination and atrocity by the Axis powers whose fulcrum at the end at least was *Der Führerbunker*. The Axis was not informed by any moral or spiritual restraint. Its forces attacked, occupied, looted, tortured, killed, and held on as long as possible. Inspired, intimidated and empowered together in a tragic alliance by Führer, Emperor and Il Duce, they embarked on what was truly and indisputably a campaign to gain world domination, eradication of whole people groups and a megalomaniacal control of global economics. German National Socialism, Japanese Imperialism and Italian Fascism titrated into one sloppy but potent elixir of evil poison--such as the world had never seen.

The “second rail” is the Allied powers. They were the rail of good, born in reaction to and of necessity against the first rail. To be sure the Allies possessed their own blemishes of moral disease, demagoguery, internal oppression and narcissistic leadership. Honest history admits their own individual pasts. But in the Great Crusade—to quote Dwight D. Eisenhower--they found themselves brought together in a common good. They bonded with an almost divinely appointed mission—or so it felt--and

prosecuted it without hesitation or intimidation. There was no ambiguity. Their mission was the total defeat of the rail of evil. In 1920 with the fields of the First World War still smoking, few could have foreseen a repeat performance in Europe of its recent travail. But by 1925 it was brewing again.

As in typical rail and subway technology, the “third rail” is the dangerous one, the electrified line. In this story, this third rail is the Allied “citizen soldiers” who witnessed all these things on the front lines, including the aftermath. In my tale I place my father and the father of my friend, Sam Wilson Jr., as representatives of the third rail. From metropolises, obscure towns, mountains and desert, back woods and average villages across the land, these made the difference. The third rail—the armed forces and the political will provided to them by the second rail—would rise to the call, perform their duty, ask no reward, give their lives on European land, in the air over Europe, at sea in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, on unknown Pacific islands and in the air over the Pacific and under both oceans. Or, they would return home and largely fade into anonymity after vanquishing the first rail. They would do this all within five years. All were given ribbons, a few medals. A few reunion committees formed and a handful have made their way back to battlefields as old men—four and five decades later--celebrated in a short-lived and token way (or so it would feel) by various media channels. They were, of course, supported by countless millions of civilians on the “home fronts.” Later Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan and George H.W. Bush all served honorably as “third rail men.” Dwight Eisenhower would uniquely embody both second and third rail roles.

The first rail of the war is infamously defined by its Axis dictator-names: Hitler, Hirohito, Mussolini. (Only Hirohito survived the war—the inheritor of an ancient cultural throne and only he could be interpreted as something other than a

megalomaniac). Some would add the name of Joseph Stalin (Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin) who began the war in league with Hitler, then allied with the Allies and prosecuted war *against* the Axis with a ruthless determination, and leading the post-war Soviet Union until his death in 1953. His atrocities upon his own citizenry are also legendary.

The second rail was characterized as well by a number of names but its representatives from the Allied perspective were all heroes: FDR, Eisenhower, MacArthur, Bradley, Nimitz, Churchill, Montgomery and de Gaulle, whose names were learned by many and will not be forgotten.

The third rail is not given to noteworthy names. It is the millions of men and women who served, sacrificed but then remain mostly unremembered. Martin Damgaard and Sam Wilson Jr. were two soldiers. Each was relieved to survive the war, return home, buy homes, raise families and neither was given to any interest in being remembered except by their families.

But their nation was saved. The first rail was vanquished. The European and Asian battlefields were quieted, liberated and sanitized of atrocities, at least for a little while.

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4

There was a time when ash trays were ubiquitous; they were everywhere. Because smokers were everywhere. And from probably his early teens, my father was a smoker—as were millions from his generation. As to ash trays, I remember from my upbringing a repurposed 105mm artillery shell-casing ash tray that my continually-smoking father used in the basement of our home—it had been on his desk throughout the war in Europe at the ever-mobile HQ of the 602nd Engineer Camouflage Battalion, of which he served as “S-2” and “S-3”. I can imagine my dad throwing it into his duffle bag or into a

box with each relocation of the 602nd’s HQ. I also remember a red and black stamped metal ash tray that had his initials “MJD” embossed with a 1934 date from his college days, which also lived stayed in our Annandale, Virginia basement. (I can hear it “clank” up against the artillery shell casing, thrown into a box.) In our home there were various jewelry packing jars, then converted to ash trays. There were lots of little cut-glass ash trays around our home that had come into the family over the years as gifts or perhaps purchases. More pedestrian was the occasional old beer can in the back yard, grabbed and used as an ash receptacle. Every car had a couple of ash trays (and at least one cigarette lighter too). Ash trays were simply a commonly needed accessory for a world of smokers who would always need someplace into which to tap, flick or dust their cigarette ashes. I guess cigar smokers needed them too although I wasn’t around cigars much in my upbringing. And also on reflection, I have not as yet read about the tobacco industry becoming extinct. Presumably people are still smoking and ashes are still being flicked somewhere.

For some reason I never picked up the habit of cigarette smoking although I was surrounded by people who did smoke. So, I never owned an ash tray. Except one. My ownership of Hermann Göring’s personal ash tray—or one of them at least—came to me when my parents died and I inherited their possessions, in 1997. The ash tray in question always just lay in the top drawer of the family slant-top desk in Annandale, Virginia where I grew up. It was not boxed or wrapped for protection—it was just there. Dad usually prefaced any of the German artifacts that he had collected (only a few) as “some crappy thing.” I was young when I asked my father what it was and where it came from. That desk, a mahogany slant-top style piece, was purchased by my parents when they were first married. They were proud of it and I grew up with it--my mother “doing up the bills there,” my dad answering correspondence and writing little notes to himself, and me doing my homework there. It had a number of

"cubbies" where papers were stuck or jammed. And two hidden slot boxes, where my dad had hidden away a couple of five-dollar bills, as I remember. In one little drawer there was an Adolph Hitler postage stamp, and two faded 35mm color slides of naked women, from the wartime. Dad also kept an eighteenth-century naval flint-lock pistol in the top drawer. He had received it, he said to me, from a German SS officer, in Germany, eager to barter good treatment from his captor (my father.) Like the ash tray, the pistol was not in a case, bubble-wrapped, labelled or celebrated in any way. It was always just there, lying there in the drawer, sort of symbolically guarding the ash tray.

The ash tray has a lip (I call it) for laying a burning cigarette on it. That lip is chipped and I can only guess at its fracturing. As a child I remember wondering at that too—is that somehow part of the short tale I heard from my dad about its procurement by him?

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5

It is a human trait to grant special focus to certain single objects. It might possess power, or high value or, if neither of these, great reputation or historic significance and as such calling out to people. Some approach being talismans. My mind goes to the mythical sword *Excalibur* in T.H. White's story *The Once and Future King* (1938-40; 1958; originally imagined in 1485) which, in the myth, a young King Arthur pulls out of a stone and eventually, finally and at the end,

throws it into a lake, when is grabbed out of nowhere by the "lady in the lake."

I think of the Toby mug, from the 1949 film *Twelve O-Clock High*, which sat on the mantle of the fireplace in the base officer's club of the 918th Bomb Group over the fireplace but would be quietly placed facing forward as a clandestine signal that a mission was imminent; they were "on" for the next day. After the war, the now retired Major Stovall who had been the 918th Adjutant sees it in an antique store window in London, buys it, takes the train to the abandoned air base and places it again on the mantle.

More examples present. In the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain there is a small silver bone box. Legend has it that the box contains the bones of St. James. Ironically, the small box is dwarfed by a much larger and far newer granite statue of the apostle which receives far more adoring attention. The bone box though, if an authentic receptacle of apostolic bones, speaks loudly though it lies largely ignored and of course silent in the basement of the cathedral. People can have goofed up priorities about what is significant.

My friend who was a Federal Judge told me about a pistol that had been used in a homocide but the murder weapon could not be found; until it *was* fortuitously recovered. It was discovered in a pond in Pennsylvania by a veteran in a diving suit who

spotted a gleam underwater. The gun had taken on something of a mysterious quality in its disappearance. But the case was completed--the pistol screamed out. The mineral content of the pond water was preserving in a unique way and the gun's serial numbers were completely recoverable, identifying the person who had used it! In its interstate role and now part of federal firearms case it became vital in the story. A single object - of powerful significance, lost and then found.

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6

In themselves, many objects are mundane, common and with no special significance. But sometimes an object surfaces that almost comes to develop its own personality, because of what it witnessed.

Other things possess no special meaning at all. A small brass gargoyle figurine from the 19th century which I owned in college. I did not know its story or history. It was old, but I ended up losing it. No great loss. A small ball peen hammer that I have, once belonged to my grandfather from his youth in middle Tennessee. He probably used it. It came to me. Of significance? No. It is as commonplace a tool as can be.

But like the pistol in the lake and like the English Toby mug, some things come to shout loudly to be heard.

Upon the occasion of German Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring's fiftieth birthday, the Reich Führer Adolph Hitler (Führer und Reichskanzier, Leader and Chancellor of the Reich, 1934-45), presented Göring with a specially crafted full set

of porcelain china which apparently, he had personally commissioned to be made for Göring. It included the ash tray which I now possess. I have as of yet found no examples "on-line" of the rest of the china but the ash tray sat in my parents' slant-top desk for fifty years, which every so often I would take out, finger, look at and wonder of its history... I say "apparently" with respect to its genesis because I only know this from the tale my father told me, and as such only two or three times. Its labelling on the back, with its maker's logo, are authentic. The rest of the story, I know only because I learned it from my father—who died in 1994.

An easy internet search reveals that Göring had amassed huge collections of china, figurines, tapestries, exquisite pieces of furniture and all manner of artwork—some by purchase, most by thievery. Some was stored in his massive villa, Carinhall, some in his home in Berchtesgaden, some in Berlin itself. He had a great love and lust for art of all kinds and thought nothing, equipped with unlimited power as he was, of just confiscating whatever he could. The volume of what he stole became so great that early in his administration he could not locate enough rail cars ("rolling stock") to transport it all out of Paris—25 box cars was insufficient for that run!

The beauty of the recovered examples of china (documented) that he possessed is unparalleled. From fine porcelain all, with gold inlay, piping and political decorations everywhere, the thousands of pieces have in the years since the end of the war,

become quite the tradable commodity.

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7

Construction of the Führerbunker in Berlin began in 1934. It was intended as an air-raid shelter initially and became the final domicile of Adolph Hitler and Eva Braun who on April 30, 1945 killed themselves. The bunker's history is fascinating. It was part of the massive Reich Chancellery complex above. Demolished mostly by the Soviets at the war's end and in years after, most of it remains buried in cement today with a few subterranean corridors still extant though inaccessible to the public. There was a period of time when various non-Soviet Allied personnel had access to the silent crypt of Naziism. At some point, probably in July 1945, my father was there.

I think it is a stretch of no one's imagination to suggest that the Third Reich, coupled with the works of their Axis partners, perpetrated the greatest evil upon the world in all of history. In terms of war related deaths, the war killed some 15 million military personnel and 38 million civilians. That is at least 53 million deaths in about 10 years. No one can say

- It was inevitable
- The victims deserved what they received by the aggressors
- The British Empire had become too "big for their britches"
- The Jews are responsible
- The war was FDR's way of getting the United States out of the Depression
- Wars always happen and once they begin there will invariably be dramatically destructive

The Second World War began in September 1939 officially and it came to a screeching halt in September 1945 after the explosion of two atomic bombs, also involving the Japanese Empire. But

its Japanese proponents had begun earlier, in Asia. The reasons for the six-year war are many and not hard to discover, unlike the First World War for which it would be difficult for the average citizen to articulate. Virtually no moral system or philosophy can justify this plague on human history. Other evils in recent human history among us are cited: human racism, its causes and climax in the American Civil War (in which there were 600,000 combat-related deaths; all the wars against American Native-Americans; European atrocities committed by the followers of Napoleon, the Czars, the Prussian kings, the Asian demagogues, all of the tragedies perpetrated by European colonialism and greed for gold; antisemitism and the Holocaust-like persecutions in times before the Second World War; and on and on. All cited, none compare to the tragedy and agony, the scope or magnitude of the Second World War whose conclusion even then seems only to have been achievable by the exploding of two atomic bombs—the case for the *new* evil of which is still being adjudicated in the moral courtrooms of modern society.

And yet it feels today like any discussions must be forced, reviewing facts and drama that is acted out in an entertaining way, teaching or preaching about lessons largely falling on deaf years to younger people. The War seems remote, long ago and basically irrelevant to modern passions. Younger citizens seem mired in an isolationist mood, much as was almost all America in 1940. Right up until Pearl Harbor. On December 8th 1941 the United States entered the Second World War, which had engulfed Great Britain, France, the Low Countries, the Soviet Union, China and other places for years by that point. The two oceans, insulating the United States

As May turned into June in 1945 Europe, and summer turned into fall on the rest of the globe, the world became quiet again. By Christmas of that year, soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coast guardsmen were coming home. Germans were cleaning the rubble in their bombed-out cities. Japanese citizens were

awakening from their national shock. Douglas MacArthur was brooding over the fate of Emperor Hirohito. Adolph Hitler's and his wife's burned corpses had disappeared from the Führerbunker's back yard. Hundreds of thousands of German POWs were disappearing in Russian camps and in *Glavnoe Upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh LAGerei* (gulags). The quiet sigh of relief would not last long. War would break out again soon enough, in Palestine in 1948, Korea in 1950, Southeast Asia in 1954, Cuba in 1959, in multitudes of small African nations, in civil unrests, coups and in the dystotic births of whole new nations.

As might be expected to read in the literature of the Third Reich is tedious and annoying. But it is intelligent—in a German kind of way--sometimes cleverly-written, and eminently clear as to goals and purposes. One can feel the evil. It is not the crass, filthy wordage found in many of today's violence-prone cartels and gangs and banana-republic military juntas. Modern sampling of Third Reich writing evaluates as generally verbose, occasionally elegant, given to a weird and puzzling "officialness", careful to detail and utterly ruthless. With its antisemitic mission, this ruthlessness is also where you feel yourself recoiling at the evil. Admittedly not all national socialists were of one "stripe." There was something of a spectrum of commitment and enthusiasm for the Nazi priorities. Some old soldiers were more about recovering old Prussian pride than about the new antisemitism. But all were filled with a desire for an anti-Versailles retribution and Hitler and his spokesmen capitalized on that. Germany had been unfairly disciplined, even abused, so their thought went. In the early 1930s even some American politicians were not out of sympathy with this. But as the Reich developed late into the 1930s and leading up to the German invasion of Poland (September 1939), the passions for antisemitism and anti-bolshevism became more animated, more pathologically inflamed. Distaste became disgust; disgust became hatred and hatred became outrage. And all upper-level Nazis were wickedly

ruthless. Their vileness should never be forgotten or nuanced downward in estimation as to its desolation. It is hard to imagine a greater expression of sinfulness.

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8

Hermann and Adolph had a long-standing and complicated relationship. They met in 1922 when Göring was 29. (Hitler was 33). A veteran World War One fighter pilot ace, Göring was a recipient of the *Pour le Mérite* ("The Blue Max"). He was the last commander of *Jagdgeschwader* 1 (JG I), the fighter wing once led by Manfred von Richthofen.

Göring had the more stellar German military record but as Hitler became Germany's new leader in 1933, the former flyer came alongside. Hitler is recorded to have said, "I liked him. I made him the head of my SA [the *Sturmabteilung*, or storm-troopers]. He is the only one of its heads that ran the SA properly. I gave him a disheveled rabble. In a very short time, he had organized a division of 11,000 men." Göring ended up, with a great many German and Nazi governmental titles, chiefly as head of the German Air Force, the Luftwaffe. But with the failure of the

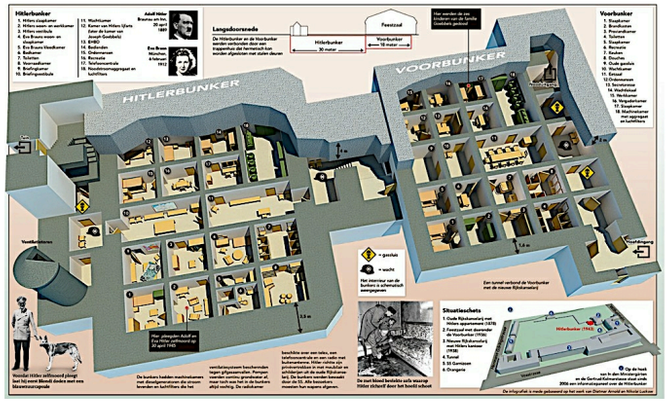
Luftwaffe to vanquish the R.A.F. to the west in 1940 and '41 (as Göring had boldly promised) and with their failure to facilitate the destruction of the Russian army in the east also in 1941, Hitler was quickly becoming disillusioned with his deputy. But still in 1942 the Führer continued to keep the Reichsmarschall close in his confidence and trust. And knowing Göring's love and fetish for nice things, Hitler commissioned a special set of porcelain china to be made in honor of the general's fiftieth birthday, January 12th, 1943. I could find no inventory list for this special *gebertstag* (birthday) gift. But this was what my father told me and with no uncertainty. It was true, he said.

Each of Hitler's confidants—Himmler, Goebbels, Speer, Göring and Bormann, and many others—were in and out of the Führerbunker often. Innumerable Army personnel, medical people, communications and technicians, guards, aides and on and on were heading up the stairs and coming back down. They were sent out on the dictator's orders, gone out on duties of their own domains, and increasingly on more shady missions including desperate security matters as the Reich's fate was becoming glaringly obvious. The Reich Chancellery and its massive front was being shelled by Soviet artillery almost non-stop. More and more the "emergency exit" was being used, including the Führer's final excursion outside the bunker on April 20th (his own 56th birthday) when we went into the garden to decorate a collection of Hitler Youth who had fought in recent battles. The administrative monster that the German

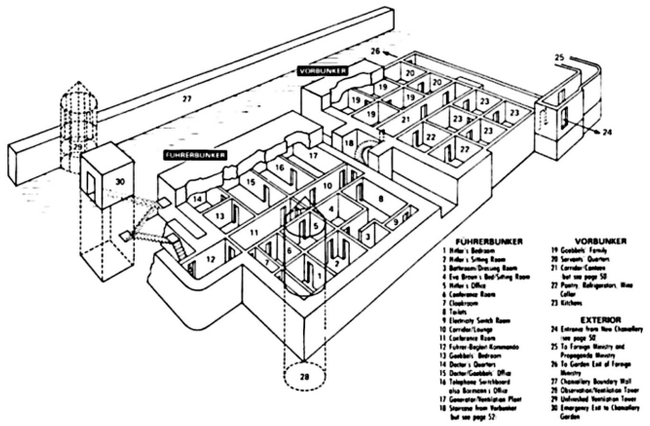
military state had become, especially as a two-front war intensified and despite its shrinking size, was snarling in constant demand to be fed. "More troops, please. More wonder-weapons. More food!" And especially, "More fuel!" These were the roars of the monster. At the same time, Hitler's health was becoming increasingly weakened. It could no longer be denied. It was obvious. And he spent his last ten days underground.

Strictly speaking, the Führerbunker was the back half, and lower part of the whole underground facility beneath the

Reich Chancellery building. The front half, which was originally a bomb shelter, was called the Vorbunker. One could not get to the Führerbunker but by first descending to and through the Vorbunker half and then descending more flights of stairs to the Führerbunker proper. The emergency exit (far left in the diagram below) provided a quick escape to the garden outside, if needed.



Another drawing also gives the overview of what was once the most dramatic and destructive headquarters in world history…



As General Weidling drove around in his armored truck, announcing over its public address apparatus that the German Army had surrendered, the Führerbunker was emptying out. One soldier remained, keeping the lights on for a time. The secretaries and aides and adjutants all fled, seeking escape from the Soviets. As noted, Soviet nurses would be the

first to enter. But all feasted on whatever treasures could be found. The above picture, from the *Life* magazine, is typical. The random items still on the table are interesting, including what appear to be a serving dish and an ash tray. They typify the chaos and the quick end to the Third Reich once Hitler was dead.

* * * * *

9

Sam Jr. on the Siegfried Line and during the Battle of the Bulge

Sam Wilson Jr. died in 1994 (as did Martin Damgaard). Sam had been a Tech 4 in the 176th Armored Field Artillery Battalion,

arriving on Utah Beach and then from there, on into the war. The 176th was attached to General George Patton's Third Army who deployed widely around France and Germany , ending their traverse near Berchtesgaden, Hitler's Eagles' Nest and Moosburg on occupation duty. Sam Jr. had a brother, Elmo Wilson, and known to some as "Buddy." He was Third Army too, who also finished out the war alive and went on to a good life as a civilian. *My* father also had a serving brother, whom my dad knew nothing about because he had disappeared in the late 1920s, who is remembered in the first essay in this collection. My Uncle Emil served as an officer in the Merchant Marine. Dad also had a nephew (Leo Yount) who was a B-26 pilot and flew 72 missions in *Flak Bait*, including two on D-Day. Each of these five Americans saw much of note in their time in Europe. They undoubtedly would have been glad to forget lots of it and none sought any engrandisements. It was a time as never was before for our country and hopefully will not be repeated.

The "third rail" of the citizen soldiers was what made V-E Day possible. In the early years and even up to the crafting of Göring's new set of china in late 1942, the outcome of the war was in doubt. The Axis may well have achieved what they were after. The Axis was a formidable enemy of human decency, liberty with any freedom, equity, opportunity and the healthy growth of science. The common good of the world's peoples was not the concern or the interest of the Axis powers.

a *Sturmgeschutz III* mobile assault gun, from senior Sam's photo album

If asked, I am sure the men and women of the Third Rail would have found little good to commend when queried about the First Rail. The American servicemen possessed the objectivity to see the humanity in their enemies but they also saw, first hand, the wickedness that was perpetrated. They could forgive, but they were not about to forget.

Viewing the ravages of war across most of the countries of Europe, looking into the eyes of men, women, children and others so deprived, robbed, stripped of their own cultures, often starved, arrested, imprisoned, tortured, systematically killed and then even harvested, Third Rail men who survived were branded with an indelible mark on their souls. After the war many had no desire to speak of what they saw. They were in no hurry to seek reparations. They sought no counseling or therapy and generally none were available. Their traverse was not just for a year's "tour of duty" but instead for "the duration plus six months." Who knew how long the "duration" would be? Our dads joined up in 1941.

They were mustered out and honorably discharged in late 1945. It might have gone longer. And in fact, because of the “points” system many were slated for redeployment to the Pacific—until Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the war's end. When they boarded their troop ships to come home, the voyage was sweet and they did not complain too much about airline delays. They travelled by steamship, by truck, by rail and by taxi cab. And then they walked up to their loved ones, delighted to be home —Sam was married, Martin was only “spoken for” and could not locate my mom at first. Coming home from Europe, among hundreds of thousands of others, was its own trial. A strange blend of joy at being alive mixed with a strange bewilderment that they were now home in a new kind of post-war culture and detached from their buddies. It was uniquely individual for each one but also communal and full of common experiences within the fraternity which has come to be known as the “band of brothers.” When occasion allowed, and if they were so inclined, they would recollect about that bond with those they had come to love as their co-warriors. Much drama would come to them and around them in the 1960s and 1970s. Another two wars, the loss to assassination of a President, a landing on the moon. And there would be for most an annoying reconfiguring of societal morals and urgencies, which many of them would call, a poisoning of so much in American culture for which they imagined they had fought to preserve. Computers and the internet. Civil rights. Demonstrations, rioting, looting. The birth of self-focused individualism that they could not understand, or honor. (And about which more than a few would mutter, “the Krauts and the Japs would not have tolerated this.”)

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10

Many would call the occasional flash of insight that humans

sometimes find, serendipitous. Others would designate such moments as mystical. Others too, might even call them spiritual. My friend Sam was pondering his father Sam Jrs' experience as a soldier. Sam Jr. was an artilleryman in the 176th Field Artillery Battalion in General George Patton’s Third Army. As a Third Rail combatant, virtually unknown, an artilleryman, a radio operator and a forward-observer, Sam Jr. participated in much combat, including the battle for Nancy and the fierce the crossing of the Moselle River. Patton of course is one of the Second Rail heroes of whom we have all heard about.

General Patton’s Third Army gave assault to the underbelly of the German “bulge” in December 1944, that is, from the south. The “bulge” had pierced the rugged Ardennes Forest of Belgium, Luxembourg and eastern France. On 16 December 1944 the “Second Rail” made its last offensive gasp of a push out of Germany, secretly, and in complete surprise to the Allies. The goal was to quickly recapture enough territory, cross the River Meuse, retake the Belgian port of Antwerp and cause enough havoc on the western front to give the German divisions on the eastern front, time to regroup and mount a credible defense there. The Bulge focused most sharply on the U.S. First Army units in the Ardennes, who were resting and manned with many “green” troops—newly recruited, undertrained and ill-equipped. The German attack was masterful and for its first week, overran much ground, killing and capturing many American troops. [**Editor note:** one of these artillery men, captured at the outset, was a friend of mine (Neil's). Manny Pacheco was another “Third Railer”, among the overrun in the beginning of the battle, in the 106th Division, captured, marched on foot about 280 km into Germany, and interred at Bad Orb P.O.W. camp (Stalag IX-B). He was liberated in early April, weighing but 78 pounds, lived to tell the tale to me, Neil, in 1986 and died in 2004.]

Sam Jr. served in the campaigns in Northern France, the Ardennes, Rhine River and into Germany. His son, Sam G.

indicates that his father would have wished no accolades for his service-he did what every good soldier did.

My friend, Sam G., was reflecting on a memory of his own…

"Something of which I have somewhat forgotten the details: on March 20th of 1972, a former German tank commander came to Wake Forest University, and spoke at a forum.

He was seventy-five and had been a General in the German army (called the Wehrmacht), and had commanded a Panzer army. His name was Major-General Hasso von Manteuffel, born in 1897 and died in 1978 in Austria. https://www.tracesofwar.com/persons/208/Manteuffel-von-Hasso-Eccard.htm

After the event was concluded, I spoke with him. Von Manteuffel knew the war was lost when they started capturing Americans with fresh candy bars. Anyone that could supply their lines like the Americans could not be beaten. I wonder if he was at the battle of Nancy during the Lorraine campaign [Sam Junior had been there]? After the Ardennes Hitler sent Von Manteuffel back to the eastern front. He must've wanted to kill him or freeze him to death. I don't remember anything other than this: Von Manteuffel thought Patton was the greatest tank commander. It's amazing. This has been stuck in my head and not recalled until now.

Von Manteuffel was in command of the Fifth Panzer Army

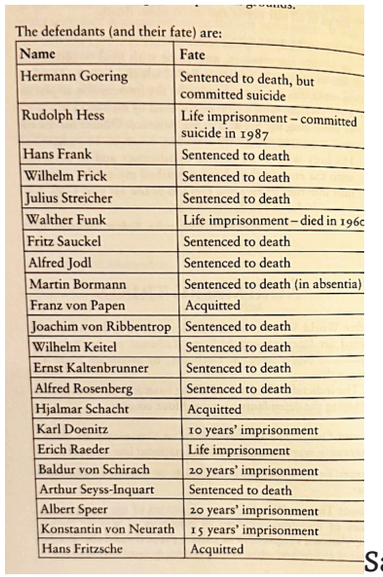
[*Oberbefehlshaber*, 5. Panzerarmee;], almost reached the Meuse River, and engaged the US forces at the battle of Bastogne. I think my dad's unit was tasked with assisting in keeping the road open for the beleaguered forces at Bastogne."

Von Manteuffel during the Ardennes offensive, December 1944.

During the Ardennes Offensive, Von Manteuffel was to form the left flank next to 6.SS- Panzer-Armee. He and his men barely reached their goal but were ultimately driven back. After the failure of the offensive, Manteuffel was again transferred to the Eastern Front. There he came under the command of Generaloberst Heinrici who commanded Heeresgruppe (Army Group) Weichsel. The army group was tasked to halt the Soviet drive on Berlin. Heinrici thought the idea futile and refused to follow orders from the Army High Command. Subsequently, Manteuffel was asked to take command of the army group but he refused. To prevent himself and his men from falling into Soviet hands, he ordered a massive retreat towards the Elbe River where he surrendered 300,000 men to the British.

In 1948, he was released from prison. After his release, he was actively engaged in German politics. He was a member of the Bundestag (German parliament) from 1953 to 1957 representing the FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei, Liberal Party). In 1959, he was suddenly charged with a war crime. He had brought a deserter to a

military tribunal and had him shot. Although this did not contravene any laws of war, he was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment nonetheless. With the help of Bundespräsident (President) Heuss, he was released four months later.



The defendants (and their fate) are:

Name	Fate
Hermann Goering	Sentenced to death, but committed suicide
Rudolph Hess	Life imprisonment – committed suicide in 1987
Hans Frank	Sentenced to death
Wilhelm Frick	Sentenced to death
Julius Streicher	Sentenced to death
Walther Funk	Life imprisonment – died in 196c
Fritz Sauckel	Sentenced to death
Alfred Jodl	Sentenced to death
Martin Bormann	Sentenced to death (in absentia)
Franz von Papen	Acquitted
Joachim von Ribbentrop	Sentenced to death
Wilhelm Keitel	Sentenced to death
Ernst Kaltenbrunner	Sentenced to death
Alfred Rosenberg	Sentenced to death
Hjalmar Schacht	Acquitted
Karl Doenitz	10 years' imprisonment
Erich Raeder	Life imprisonment
Baldur von Schirach	20 years' imprisonment
Arthur Seyss-Inquart	Sentenced to death
Albert Speer	20 years' imprisonment
Konstantin von Neurath	15 years' imprisonment
Hans Fritzsche	Acquitted

Sam G. continues: "Fast forward 30 years and he is at a speakers' forum at Wake Forest. It was held at Waite chapel on campus. It was not a crowded event, but well attended I suppose. Fast forward another 30 years and my daughter is married in the chapel. The minister of my church, in Roanoke, who baptized her when she was six months old, performed the ceremony. He stood at almost precisely the same place, as I remember the General standing. If there is a such thing as retroactive catharsis, I have achieved it. In today's environment, Wake Forest would probably disallow his speech because of his Nazi past. I would have been denied this cathartic moment. It was not a moment to showcase the General but rather a display of the otherwise unseen hand of heaven."

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11

Back to the ash tray. It lay in the desk drawer for decades, well, four, actually. It did not speak of what it saw. It did not glow with the fingerprints of who had handled it. Its infamous owner ended his life dishonorably by suicide in the hours just before he was to be executed with twelve other Nuremberg defendants for the crimes against humanity of the Third Reich. Ten others served prison terms and others were given lesser penalties. The ash tray received the dust of countless Führerbunker cigarettes while the tragic smoke of millions of Axis victims rose unmourned from countless chimneys of concentration camps, crematoria, field-immolations, fired homes and businesses, battlefields and naval fires in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

My dad spied the ash tray in his visit to the bunker, probably turned it over and saw its owner's label. He tossed it, in a quick thought, into his haversack along with a small pair of bandage scissors which also seemed to him a worthy grab. My mother never spoke of the common piece of china but it came to me upon her death. I possess it still. When my friend Sam Wilson examined it, it seemed to him a notable piece of historical memorabilia, perhaps important. His inspiration drove the writing of this paper. He suggested that the keepsake deserves to be thought-through and then somehow, to be chronicled.

The point is not to glorify or obsess over yet another interesting artifact, turning its possession into yet another fetish. It is not to impress anyone or to parade some brilliance in the crafting of porcelain. It is certainly not to give any pedestal to the Third Reich moments of conquest or fame.

The point is to notice, to observe, to appreciate and to illustrate to any reader that a seemingly common and unimpressive piece of appliance can in fact have been witness to some great moment in history. Or if that is not the point, it might be more fitting to identify that the common combatant in war might stumble upon a powerful museum-like treasure. He might only gradually and eventually come to appreciate the high drama which that treasure witnessed. In this, it is more like when King Tut's tomb was opened, or the Rosetta Stone was discovered or a Norden bombsite was discovered in the jungle.

Warriors have returned to their homes for thousands of years clutching many examples of the spoils of war. That's nothing new. But it is humbling to me to have that reality dawn, as the heir of a small personal token that was both art and utility, taken out of a powerfully important time, drawn from a critical location which itself no longer exists, not revered in any way and just kept in a drawer. There is a small flag, a pair of bandage scissors, a flintlock pistol and Herman Göring's ash tray that tell me I have been blessed with a very small page of a huge story. The Third Rail men left to us their memory and a legacy

of the honor of their service.

Sam G. Wilson's recent reflection seems appropriate to me for ending this Essay:

They have been called the greatest generation. Side-by-side our forbearers warred against evil – Nazism, one of the greatest scourges to ever afflict humanity. They stepped up while the world was in peril. The soldiers and their spouses have all but passed from the American landscape and soon will disappear. They confronted an enemy on a battlefield writ large.

They cared little about the politics of their comrade in arms. In the shadow of darkness, the value of life remained clear and politics trivial. American soldiers returned home at war's end expecting nothing but to live in peace.

Most were never able to return to the iconic battlefield in human history, where good, if only for a season triumphed, where light shined in the darkness and the darkness was not able to overcome it. Remember and hold fast to the sacrifices of these your forbearers. Your great-grandfather witnessed a Holocaust that shook him to the core. We cannot forget.

The words of the chief prosecutor at Nuremberg, Robert Jackson, are not only a haunting reminder of the past but a warning to the future to remember who and what our humanity endured and what decent men and women sought to vanquish—

"…Sinister influences that will lurk in the world long after [the Nazis were tried for war crimes] have returned to dust… – living symbols of racial hatreds, of terrorism and violence, and of the arrogance and cruelty of power.…

Civilization can afford no compromise with the social forces which would gain renewed strength if we deal ambiguously or indecisively with the men in whom these forces now precariously survive."

CONCLUSION

I hope I will find other random discoveries in my "dresser drawer"—new themes which translate into essays, which define me, which have interested, even fascinated and captivated me. If I am granted the privilege of writing more, I hope it will be of value to my descendants. I am fated to live in *this* time, with all its wonder and challenges. It is changing quickly but some urgencies--some lessons--are universal to every generation.

These Essays weave together some of my family's heritage from the 20th century--complemented by music, humor and the sad tale of my friend, Glenn. My desire was to *honor* everyone in these stories, from the Buchenwald victims to my family members, to Glenn, and others too. As to my family, I have been proud of its lore, its plain humanity with all the beauty, contradictions, frailty and just getting caught up in the times in which we have been. We are not aristocratic (save one princess, banished for marrying a commoner), not intelligentsia and not "to the manor born." My progenitors fought in wars. They sailed in ships at sea and Uncle Emil was buried at sea. They saw hard things, none harder than that seen by Emil's youngest brother, my father. They worked hard, they laughed and found humor in unlikely places, they had families and they honored their country. They were not whiners. They complained little. Some were Lutheran, others more generally Protestant and a few "evangelical." They would all have made old Jens and Kirstine back in Denmark proud.

Books by the Author

SHADOWS OF RAVENSWORTH

Tales and remembrances of the author's neighborhood (Columbia Pines), his hometown (Annandale, Virginia) and his county (Fairfax)—all on the lands of the colonial Ravensworth plantation. Published by Amazon in 2023.

A GHOST IN AUGUST

A time-travel fantasy/mystery in which the author awakens in the middle of a road, in his hometown of Annandale, Virginia but in 1862. Published by Amazon in 2023.

HIT-G

A Christocentric science-fantasy which takes place in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Ogden, Utah and São Paulo, Brazil. A contemporary novel, published by Amazon in 2023.

WOUNDED FAITH – *UNDERSTANDING AND HEALING FROM SPIRITUAL ABUSE*

A compendium of articles and essays by a guild of cult-survivors, therapists, scholars and clergy, focusing on dealing with spiritual abuse from within various religious communities. The author served as Editor and contributed two articles. Published through Amazon by the International Cultic Studies Association in 2022.

DEFIANCE AT CAIRO

The story of the author's parents, built upon his father's World War Two letters to his mother from Europe, showing the merging of the Damgaard and Porch families. Published by Book Baby in 2020.

A HISTORY OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH: 1963 TO 2013

A complete history of a local church in Southcoast, Massachusetts on the occasion of the church's fiftieth anniversary. Interviews with most of the former pastors and many leaders from over the years. Illustrated with photos and lists of significant people in the church's history. Published by Westbow Press, of Thomas Nelson Publishers, in 2013.

All books are available via Amazon.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neil Damgaard

Raised in Northern Virginia, graduate of Virginia Tech and Dallas Theological Seminary (ThM and DMin), he served as a young engineer for Naval Sea Systems Command and then as an intern and Director of Campus Ministries for Grace Church (Roanoke Virginia) then as Senior Pastor of the Dartmouth Bible Church and also as Protestant Chaplain at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, from 1983 until 2019. He has been married since 1975 to Renée, a legal secretary and then high school math teacher and graduate of Virginia Western Community College and the Southeastern Massachusetts University. They raised two wonderful daughters, Jocelyn, an engineer and patent attorney for Boeing and mother of two children, Raymond and Jane--and Susanna, a Registered Nurse and "triple crown" hiker. Now retired in Roanoke, Neil and Renée enjoy the company of Halsey and Sandy, mini-poodle and senior kitty. The Top Dresser Drawer is his seventh book.

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